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Origen's Polemics in *Princ* 4.2.4: Scriptural Literalism as a Christo-Metaphysical Error

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Abstract

The relation between Books 1-3 and Book 4 of Origen's *Peri Archon* has largely been left unspecified or denied. This is due to the apparent incongruence between the metaphysical discussions of the former section and the hermeneutical remarks of the latter. I argue that Origen's threefold distinction of Scripture in *Princ* 4.2.4 draws upon key metaphysical conclusions of the earlier sections to depict the metaphysical structure of inspired Scripture as analogous to the Incarnation, and that this insight constitutes Origen's fundamental polemic against scriptural literalism, the common error of the two primary adversaries of the work (the "simple" of the Church and the Marcionites). *Peri Archon* is thus unified around the polemical purpose of defending Origen's allegorical exegesis.

Keywords

Origen – *Peri Archon* – Incarnation – Scripture – metaphysics – hermeneutics – polemics

Introduction

It is odd that Origen's *Peri Archon*,[1] the first so-called "systematic theology" in Christian history, should lack a unified purpose and a consistent argument as a

1 English translation: G.W. Butterworth, *Origen: On First Principles* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1973), unless otherwise noted. Critical edition: Herwig Görgemanns and Heinrich Karpp, *Origenes Vier Bücher von den Prinzipien*. Texte zur Forschung 24 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992), hereafter GK.

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whole. The logical relation between Books 1-3 and Book 4 is often left unspecified or denied, the former parts dominated by cosmological and metaphysical concerns, the latter preoccupied with hermeneutical and pedagogical instruction.[2] Yet the discontinuity between these two sections may be an indication of a fundamental failure to discern the relations between the two subject matters, an inattention to how Origen's hermeneutics, for example, are essentially contextualized within his metaphysics.[3]

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2 B. Steidle, "Neue Untersuchungen zu Origenes' Περὶ ἀρχῶν," *ZNW* (1941): 236-43, whose three-part division of *Peri Archon* has found lasting acceptance, subsumes the hermeneutical discussion under the second cycle (*Princ* 2.4-4.3) without explanation; Paul Kübel, "Zum Aufau von Origenes' De Principiis," *Vigiliae Christianae* 25 (1971): 31-9 also fails to see how Book 4 relates to the rest of *Peri Archon*: "With Book IV . . . begins, in any case, an entirely new section" (36, n.33); both Marguerite Harl, "Structure et cohérence de *Peri Archon*," in *Origeniana: Premier colloque international des études origéniennes* (*Montserrat, 18-21 septembre 1973*). Dirigé par Henri Crouzel, Gennaro Lomiento, and Josep Rius-Camps (Bari: Istituto di letteratura cristiana antica, Universita' di Bari, 1975) 11-32 and Gilles Dorival, "Remarques sur la Forme du Peri Archôn," in ibid 33-45 place 4.1-3 within the second cycle, which contains more nuanced commentary on the topical schema announced in the Preface; Joseph Wilson Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-century Church* (London: John Knox Press, 1983) 120, esp. 91-4 asserts that Book 4 is "a digression," since the topic of biblical interpretation "does not directly concern God's dealings with the created world" like the first three books; Charles Kannengieser, "Divine Trinity and the Structure of *Peri Archon*," in *Origen of Alexandria: His World and Legacy*. Eds. Charles Kannengiesser and William L. Petersen. Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity, vol. 1 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988) 233: "book IV has obviously been added to the other three as a complementary introduction into Origenian hermeneutics." The one exception is Brian E. Daley, S.J., "Origen's *De Principiis*: A Guide to the Principles of Christian Scriptural Interpretation," in *Nova & Vetera: patristic Studies in Honor of Thomas Patrick Halton.* Ed. John Petruccione (Washington, D.C.: catholic university of America, 1998), 3-21, discussed below.

3 Three notes on "metaphysics" and Origen. First, "metaphysics" designates what Robert M. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen: Middle Platonism in Transition* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984) 113 calls Origen's "theoretic" or "physics," i.e. an inquiry into or description of the "nature" (φύσις/*natura*) of things (cf. *Princ* 1.pref.2; *Cant* Prol. 3). It concerns "what" something is, rather than just "why," "who/what" made it thus, or "how" it is to be used. In Aristotelian terms, metaphysics probes the material (τὸ ἐξ οὗ) and formal (τὸ καθ' ὅ) causes of a thing, not just its efficient (τὸ ὑφ' οὗ) and final (τέλος) causes. Origen evokes these four causes during a survey of the many senses of the word "cause" or "principle" (ἀρχή) in a passage written before Περὶ ἀρχῶν (*Jo* 1.103-111; cf. Blanc, SC 120, 118-9 n. 2); cf. n. 5 for its date. The "nature" of Scripture, then, in terms of metaphysics, refers to its material and formal causes—an emphasis in no way exclusive of Scripture's efficient (authorial) and final (soteriological) causes. Indeed, as Origen intimates (*Cant* Prol. 3), a thing's physics is always beholden to the Creator's purpose. Cf. also Sarah Spangler, "Christology as the Basis of Metaphysics in Origen's *Commentary on John*," *Studia Patristica* 46 (2010): 250, who argues that Origen's description of Christ as the "source" (ἀρχή) of the four causes in creation demonstrates that he sees

There have even been hints of a unified purpose. Both Pierre Nautin and Ronald Heine argue that the historical circumstances within which Origen composed *Peri Archon* suggest that he did so to defend and justify allegorical interpretation of Scripture.[4] He had employed his brand of spiritual hermeneutics in the *Commentary on Genesis* and the *Commentary on John*, both of which he suspended in order to write *Peri Archon*.[5] Moreover, Brian Daley convincingly argues that *Peri Archon* betrays an Aristotelian-like scientific

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metaphysics "as a natural corollary of his Christological focus," a point quite evident in Origen's discussion of Christ as "Wisdom" (*Princ* 1.2.2-3), but also, as we will see, in his discussion of Christ's Incarnation (*Princ* 2.6). Second, "nature" can have two senses in this essay: [1] most often, with Origen (e.g. *Princ* 1.1.6), a synonym of *substantia*, "substance," i.e. the peculiar being (ουσία) of a thing, which applies to every being (Berchman, *From Origen to Philo*, 122); [2] heuristically, a reference to the whole metaphysical "structure" of a composite thing, i.e. its substance(s) and form—e.g. the "nature" of inspired Scripture is a union of divine incorporeal substance (Spirit), created incorporeal substance (soul), and created corporeal substance (body). Finally, my emphasis on metaphysics is not meant to depict Origen as a speculative metaphysician, whose general project aims to solve the philosophical questions of his day, as Berchman's work might imply. Nor do I wish, however, to rid Origen of any metaphysical interest, as if a metaphysical point could not be pastorally beneficial or a soteriological outlook could ignore metaphysical realities. As Eusebius indicates (*H.E.* 6.19), Origen's forays into philosophy served at least one useful pastoral (and soteriological) purpose—to refute heretical teachings. And though some may find the fluidity and ease with which Origen treats Christological and metaphysical topics to be something of a "revolution" in Greek metaphysics, such a judgment only makes sense if Origen is just one in a long line of Greek philosophers. The "revolution" is nothing other than this: Origen is Christian, and so every pressing question is ultimately referred to Christ's revelation (*Princ* 1.pref.1). For a helpful summary of Origen's relationship to the contemporary philosophy of his day, see Gilles Dorival, "Origène d'Alexandrie," in *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*. Dirigé par R. Goulet. t. IV (Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique: Paris, 2005) 807-842, and esp. 815-16 for the specifically Christian philosophical "formation" Origen promoted. Dorival helpfully points out that the title itself, *Peri Archon*, "has no other value than to situate his work in the philosophical tradition" (821), though "from a Christian point of view" (823).

4 Pierre Nautin, *Origène: Sa vie et son oeuvre* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977) 369-70, 423-5; Ronald E. Heine, *Origen: Scholarship in Service of the Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 87.

5 Nautin 369-70, 423-5. I follow Heine, *Origen*, 87 n.20 against Nautin 366f in his dating of the start of *Commentary on John* to 217 CE, taking Eusebius's (*H.E.* 6.19) mention of a "war in the city" as a reference not to the animosity between Demetrius and Origen, but referring more broadly (and violently) to Caracalla's massacre in 215 CE. In that case Origen's comment about being physically absent from Alexandria for a time at the beginning of the first book (*Jo* 1.12) alludes to this earlier incident, placing the composition of Books 1-5 before the writing of *Peri Archon* in 229-30 CE. Thus Origen ceased writing both commentaries when he turned to *Peri Archon*.

program undertaken to systematize scriptural interpretation, Book 4 being "the real goal" of the entire treatise.[6] It remains unclear, though, how the discussions of the earlier parts of the work play a significant role in Origen's exegetical remarks in Book 4.

I suggest that a key link between the earlier and later parts comes in *Princ* 4.2.4, Origen's oft-discussed threefold distinction of the body, soul, and Spirit of Scripture. This link has proved elusive because the polemical and metaphysical character of Origen's declaration has been underappreciated.[7] The polemical context of Origen's tripartite portrayal of Scripture indicates that this distinction is not merely a presentation of hermeneutical theory for the benefit of other biblical expositors, but also a demonstration of the error of hermeneutical literalism, the root problem of his adversaries (*Princ* 4.2.1-2). Moreover, this demonstration is integrally related to earlier metaphysical discussions in the work, specifically two premises established in the first and second cycles: [1] the divine nature transcends all created incorporeal and corporeal natures, which entails a threefold metaphysics of all reality (divine incorporeal nature, created incorporeal nature, created corporeal nature); [2] the Incarnation of the Logos reveals the only manner by which these three metaphysical natures can be completely and perfectly unified. Origen argues these points against the same interlocutors he addresses in Book 4, and so their polemical force is still fundamentally operative in *Princ* 4.2.4 where they are combined to portray the metaphysical structure of inspired Scripture as analogous to the Incarnation. This unique definition of the nature of inspired Scripture, of what "Scripture" is, combined with the notion of interpretation as sensory apprehension (αἴσθησις), amounts to an argument against literalism, for the structure of Scripture itself entails a more-than-bodily hermeneutical approach: allegory.

My argument progresses in three movements. I first propose some modifications to the commonly conceived structure of *Peri Archon*, and observe how its cyclical character is oriented toward Origen's principal interlocutors: the "simple" of the church and the Marcionites. These are also the main targets in Book 4, where Origen's rebuttal culminates in the identification of scriptural

6 Daley, "Origen's *De Principiis*," 13.

7 Karen Jo Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986) 40-3, and Elizabeth Ann Dively Lauro, *The Soul and Spirit of Scripture within Origen's Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 40-7 interpret *Princ* 4.2.4 in primarily pedagogical and soteriological terms, i.e. in terms of the final (and efficient) causes of Scripture. My reading does not contradict the observation that, for Origen, Scripture's nature is determined by its role in the incarnational economy of salvation, but wishes to emphasize how that nature serves ongoing polemical concerns in *Peri Archon*.

literalism as their common error. Second, I observe the metaphysical character of Origen's threefold distinction of Scripture in *Princ* 4.2.4, and trace its roots in the earlier parts of *Peri Archon*. The intimate link between Books 1-3 and Book 4 provides the metaphysical context within which the structure of inspired Scripture *must* be perceived as a direct analogy to the Incarnation. Third, these aspects reveal *Princ* 4.2.4 to be the climax in Origen's ongoing argument with his interlocutors, for in that passage Origen brings earlier established metaphysical and incarnational premises to bear on the nature of Scripture itself, a nature that can only be truly apprehended through spiritual interpretation. Thus the unity of *Peri Archon* emerges, since it is precisely the earlier metaphysical conclusions of the treatise that establish the latter hermeneutical conclusions, particularly the refutation of scriptural literalism and the initial justification of allegory.

Polemics: The Structure of *Peri Archon*, its Interlocutors, and their Common Error

Structure: Preface, Two Cycles, Culmination, Recapitulation

One cannot perceive a consistent argument in a work whose overall structure remains obscure. Bastilius Steidle saw the structural logic of *Peri Archon* not in the four-book divisions, but in three main "masses of content" (Stoffmassen).[8] These sections are demarcated by a recurring three-topic schema, already enumerated in the Preface—God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), rational beings, and (visible) World. This pattern surfaces three times throughout the work, in two primary "cycles" and a recapitulation. Thus the cyclical structure of *Peri Archon* emerges in its content rather than its technical four-book division.[9]

8 Steidle 238-9 points out that the earliest testimonies to Origen's *Peri Archon* (Marcellus of Ancyra and Eusebius) do not mention the number of books. He also offers a few examples from antiquity illustrating that for a work to have "four books" often indicated the banal fact that it was published on four scrolls.

9 Steidle 239. The three cycles or "courses" in *Peri Archon*: On God (1.1-3 = 2.4-7 = 4.4.1-5), on Rational Nature/Beings (1.4-8 = 2.8-3.4 = 4.4.9-10), on the visible World/Cosmos (2.1-3 = 3.5-6 = 4.4.6-8). *Princ* 4.1-3 does not fit any of these categories, but Steidle includes it in the second section anyway.

Steidle's two-cycle structure, though variously interpreted, has proved persuasive.[10] What rests unclear, however, is whether the second cycle (what follows *Princ* 2.3) should include the hermeneutical discussions of *Princ* 4.1-3.[11] If so, these discussions would have little to do with the first cycle (*Princ* 1.1-2.3) and would not constitute, consequently, "the real goal" of *Peri Archon*.[12] Yet there are good reasons to think that the second cycle ought to terminate at the end of Book 3, and that *Princ* 4.1-3 is instead the polemical culmination of both cycles.

It is instructive to recall the specific topics Origen evokes in the Preface of *Peri Archon*, and then where he actually addresses them in the work itself. Of course, as noted, his general three-topic schema is God/Rational Creatures/World, but the explication of each involves several nuanced issues within these broad categories. A careful catalogue of the distribution of these issues yields significant insight into the work's overall structure and purpose.[13] The next page includes a summary in chart-form:

10 Harl, "Structure," 16 retains Steidle's divisions, but seeks to explain why there are two cycles: "the first exposition (ordered, complete and succinct) gives a preamble to that which is the principal object of the work; it gives a sort of *conspectus* of all the doctrines, on those three subjects, before moving on to the examination of the difficult questions, taken up for themselves in particular." Dorival, "Remarques sur la Forme du Peri Archôn," 33-8 offers late antique parallels in philosophical works that seem to follow a similar two-cycle, general-to-specific progression. Charles Kannengiesser, "Origen Systematician in *De Principiis*," in *Origeniana Quinta . . . Papers of the 5th International Origen Congress, Boston College, 14-18 August 1989*. Ed. Robert J. Daly (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992) 398 takes a contrary view, that the original *Peri Archon* consisted only of a much shorter form of the Preface (*Princ* 1.pref.1-3 and 8), the first cycle (*Princ* 1.1-2.3), and the recapitulation at the end (*Princ* 4.4). The rest of the work—the expanded Preface and the second cycle—is "a series of lectures" that Origen found "helpful and convenient to add to his original *Peri Archon*."

11 Steidle 238; Kübel 36; Harl, "Structure," 18-19; Kannengieser, "Divine Trinity," 235.

12 Daley, "Origen's *De Principiis*," 13.

13 Harl, "Structure," 18-19 also includes a helpful summary, but she assumes that the "second part" extends to *Princ* 4.3 and noticeably limits her enumeration of the topics to the chapter titles given by Photius (*Bibl Cod* 8).

Distribution of Preface Topics in Peri Archon

	Preface *Princ* **1.pref.1-10**	**Cycle 1** *Princ* **1.1-2.3**	**Cycle 2** *Princ* **2.4-3.6**	**Culmination** *Princ* **4.1-3**[14]
God (Divine Incorporeal Nature)	*God the Father* (1.pref.4) 1) Creator of All (GCS 9, 13-15) 2) God of OT and NT (GCS 9, 15-10, 4)	1) Creator of All (1.1)	2) God of OT and NT (2.4-5)	
	God the Son (1.pref.4) 1) Only-Begotten, All things made through Him (GCS 10, 5-7) 2) Incarnation (GCS 10, 7-11, 1)	1) Only-Begotten, All things made through Him (1.2)	2) Incarnation (2.6)	
	God the Holy Spirit (1.pref.4) 1) Equal in Dignity, Ambiguous otherwise (GCS 11, 3-7) 2) Inspired both OT and NT (GCS 11, 7-10)	1) Equal in Dignity, Ambiguous otherwise (1.3)	2) Inspired both OT and NT (2.7)	

14 This chart does not include the last chapter of the work, the *recapitulatio* (*Princ* 4.4.), because it is not directly germane to the argument of this article.

	Preface *Princ* **1.pref.1-10**	**Cycle 1** *Princ* **1.1-2.3**	**Cycle 2** *Princ* **2.4-3.6**	**Culmination** *Princ* **4.1-3**
Rational Creatures (Created Incorporeal Nature)	*Soul* (1.pref.5) 1) Substance (GCS 11, 11-12,1) 2) Judgment and Resurrection (GCS 12,1-7)	1) Substance (1.4-5) 2) Judgment and Resurrection (1.6-7, 2.3)	2) Judgment and Resurrection (2.10-11)	
	Free Will (1.pref.5) 1) Freedom and Struggle (GCS 12, 8-13, 6) 2) Beginning/Source (GCS 13, 7-11)		1) Freedom and Struggle (3.1-4) 2) Beginning/ Source (2.8-9)	
	Devil and Demons (1.pref.6) 1) What they are (GCS 13, 12-14) 2) Devil's Apostasy (GCS 13, 14-17)	1) What they are (1.5) 2) Devil's Apostasy (1.5)	1) What they are (3.2.1)	
	Angels (1.pref.10)[15]	(1.8)		

15 The point about angels seems out of place, added at the end of the other points of the "rule" but actually belonging to the discussion of rational nature, i.e. with souls, demons, the devil, stars, etc, as in *Princ* 1.8. Indeed, GK 233 n.1 suggest that 1.7 and 1.8 should be grouped together under the title "On the Higher Orders of Rational Nature."

Distribution of Preface (*cont.*)

	Preface *Princ* **1.pref.1-10**	**Cycle 1** *Princ* **1.1-2.3**	**Cycle 2** *Princ* **2.4-3.6**	**Culmination** *Princ* **4.1-3**
World (Created Corporeal Nature)	*Visible World* (1.pref.7)	(2.1-3)	(3.5-6)	
	Scripture (1.pref.8-9)			
	1) Inspiration (GCS 14, 6-7)	3) Incorporeality (1.1)[16]	1) Inspiration (2.7)[17]	1) Inspiration (4.1-2)
	2) Interpretation (GCS 14, 7-13)			2) Interpretation (4.2-3)
	3) Incorporeality (GCS 14, 16-15, 27)			3) Incorporeality (4.3.15)

While most assume that the second cycle extends through *Princ* 4.3—Origen's discussion of Scripture tacked on at the end[18]—three features in the chart suggest that the second cycle terminates with the completion of Book 3. First, if we follow the chart's display both cycles cover the same topics in basically the same order. Origen himself suggests such a tight correspondence between the subject matter of the first and second cycles when he states at the beginning of his second exposition of the Holy Spirit:

> After the first discussions which, as the subject demanded, we entered into at the beginning concerning the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, it seemed that we ought to go back again (*visum est rursum repetere nos*

16 Incorporeality features prominently in the first chapter, and, as in the preface (*Princ* 1.pref.9), is preeminently connected with the divine nature. However, the specific discussion of the word ἀσώματον does not occur until *Princ* 4.3.15 (but cf. 2.3.6)—the end of Origen's discussion of the inspiration and interpretation of Scripture.

17 This chapter treats the Holy Spirit's function, the epitome of which is his inspiration of both OT and NT. But the *fact* of inspiration appears only at *Princ* 4.1.

18 Daley, "Origen's *De Principiis*," 14-15 seems to conceive of the cycle boundaries in the manner I have laid out in the chart, but offers no supporting argument.

> *debere*) and prove that the same God was creator and founder of the world and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.[19]

If this is the case for all the topics enumerated in the Preface, then we ought to restrict the second cycle to the end of the correspondence in *Princ* 3.6.

Second, when taken in this manner, both cycles *together* address the specific nuances of each overall topic, while neither cycle does alone. This is most evidently the case with "God" (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). When Origen treats God the Father in the first cycle (*Princ* 1.1), it is as Creator of all things, and hence beyond all things (i.e. space and time). But in the second cycle he concentrates on how this Creator God is the same God of the OT and the NT (*Princ* 2.4-5), which was the other major issue raised by the "rule" in connection with the Father (*Princ* 1.pref.4). It is the same with the Son. In the first cycle Origen focuses on the Son as the "Only-Begotten" through whom all things are created, whereas in the second cycle he discusses the Son's Incarnation (*Princ* 2.6). Thus both of the more prominent and specific issues raised concerning the Son in the Preface (*Princ* 1.pref.4) are, in the course of both cycles, eventually treated.[20] This validates the tight correspondence between the cycles as laid out above.

Finally and most significantly, Origen does not treat Scripture in *either* of the first two cycles, though he explicitly raises this as a topic of discussion in the Preface along with the rest (*Princ* 1.pref.8).[21] While he treats the various aspects of every major topic (God-Rational Nature-World) within the confines of the two cycles, he reserves his consideration of Scripture for Book 4.[22] It cannot be included in the second cycle, for there is no parallel in the first

19 *Princ* 2.7.1, GK 372/GCS 147, 24-148, 1.

20 Origen's discussion of rational nature as a whole follows suit. In the Preface he sets out four separate points in connection with rational nature: the soul itself, free will, devil/demons, and angels (*Princ* 1.pref.5-7 and 10). Although these specific points are not equally distributed between the two cycles (e.g. free will), for Origen these points *together* are all about one metaphysical nature (*Princ* 1.4.2, 1.5.1, 3.5.4). In this sense, therefore, Origen does scatter his discussion of rational nature over both cycles.

21 Although the chart shows two "sub-categories" emerging in the first and second cycles, it is clear that neither is an exposition of Scripture as detailed in the Preface. See the relevant notes to the chart.

22 *Princ* 4.1.1, GK 670/GCS 293, 1-2: καὶ οὐδέπω περὶ τῶν γραφῶν ὡς θείων διελέχθημεν/"We have not yet, however, discussed the divine character of the scriptures" (Butterworth 256).

cycle, as with every other topic in the Preface.[23] This is either because it is some kind of addition to the real substance of the work (i.e. an appendix), or because it is actually the culmination of the work itself. If *Princ* 4.1-3 is indeed the culmination, then the primary concerns of both cycles should play an integral part in its contents.

Interlocutors: The Simple and the Marcionites (*Princ 1-3*)

Given these boundaries for the two cycles of Books 1-3, we will now consider how each cycle is directed toward one primary polemical target.[24] Several scholars have demonstrated the anti-Marcionite character of the second cycle.[25] The chart reflects this emphasis in the contents unique to the second

23 Harl notes that Origen excludes a discussion of Scripture in the first cycle ("Structure," 24). But if, as Harl argues, the first cycle is supposed to be an overview of the topics, while the second is a more detailed pursuit of the particulars of those topics, then why is Scripture wholly absent in the overview (i.e. first cycle)?

24 It would be a gross oversimplification to think that Origen *only* addresses the simple in the first cycle and *only* the Marcionites in the second. This is manifestly untrue since the simple are in fact addressed in the second cycle (*Princ* 2.10.3, 3.2.1, 3.6.5) and heretics in the first (*Princ* 1.2.6, 1.7.2, 1.8.2). Furthermore, several different "heresies" are addressed when convenient: a purely "spiritual" conception of the Resurrection (*Princ* 2.10.1), the eternality of matter (*Princ* 3.5.3, 4.4.5), the mutability of divine nature in the Incarnation (*Princ* 4.4.1), etc. That Origen orients his discussion toward a primary target does not imply that he refrains from addressing others when pertinent and expedient.

25 This was Steidle's thesis (240-3) already in 1941. Since then Josep Rius-Camps has championed and further developed this position, as in his "Origenes y Marción: Carácter preferentemente antimarcionita del prefacio y del Segundo ciclo del *Peri Archon*," in *Origeniana*, 297-312. Origen certainly engages others, and even twice names Valentinus and Basilides along with Marcion (*Princ* 2.7.1, 2.9.5), though even here Marcion is given pride of place, as noted by Alan B. Scott, "Opposition and Concession: Origen's Relationship to Valentinianism," in *Origenia Quinta . . . Papers of the 5th International Origen Congress, Boston College, 14-18 August 1989*. Ed. Robert J. Daly (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992): 83 n.10. Several considerations, however, confirm that Origen singles out Marcion among the heretics in *Peri Archon*: [1] Clement of Alexandria expressed his desire to compose a largely anti-marcionite work entitled *Peri Archon* (*Strom* 3.3, 4.1); [2] the prominence of the typical Marcionite just/good distinction between Old and New Testament Gods (*Princ* 1.pref.4, 2.4-5); [3] Marcion favored literalist hermeneutics more than other heretics, which Origen specifically names as the fundamental error of his interlocutors in *Princ* 4.2.2 (see n.50); [4] Origen conceives of Marcion as the fount of all heretics. Pamphilus (*Apol pro Or* 33) preserves a fragment from Origen's *Commentary on Titus* where a "heretic" is defined as one who believes in Christ but "says that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is not he who is proclaimed by the law and the prophets . . . men of this type we designate as heretics, however various, however different, however fantastic be

cycle. There Origen argues that the God of the OT and NT are the same (*Princ* 2.4), that God is both just and good (*Princ* 2.5), that the same Spirit inspired the OT and NT (*Princ* 2.7)—all of which refute the Marcionite partition between the Gods of each Testament. In the most extensive portion he defends the inherent freedom of rational natures against the "two-nature" or "three-nature" theories of the heretics (*Princ* 3.1-4).[26] He even begins the second cycle with a declared adversary: "it follows from the plan which we adopted at the beginning that we proceed to refute those who think that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is a different God from him who gave Moses the sayings of the law and sent the prophets"—clearly Marcion, the classic proponent of this view.[27]

What has not been readily perceived, however, is that the first cycle is just as much a polemically-oriented exposition as the second.[28] Just as the second cycle opened with a foil, so begins the first:

> I am aware that there are some who will try to maintain that even according to our scriptures God is a body, since they find it written in the books of Moses, 'Our God is a consuming fire', and in the Gospel according to John, 'God is spirit . . .'. Now these men will have it that fire and spirit are body and nothing else.[29]

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the fictions they concoct" (Scheck, FOTC, 55), and goes on to list Marcion, Valentinus, Basilides, the Sethians, and Apelles. Thus Origen knows of the diversity of the "heretics" but also discerns a common denominator in the Marcionite division of divinity.

26 The heresy of "fixed natures" (whether two or three) is a common theme in *Peri Archon* (*Princ* 1.5, 1.7.2, 1.8.2, 2.9.5, 3.1.8, 3.4.5). While this was certainly a hallmark Valentinian doctrine (cf. Irenaeus, *Haer* 1.5; three natures), Origen also attributes it to Marcion and Basilides (*Princ* 2.9.5). Tertullian's stalwart defense of free will (*Adv Marc* 2.6 and 9) also seems to assume that Marcion held to the fixity of a thing's nature in accordance with its creator; hence Marcion deduced the inferiority of the God of the OT from the fall of humanity.

27 *Princ* 2.4.1, GK 328/GCS 126, 22-127, 3; cf. GK 329 nn.3 and 4.

28 So Kannengieser, "Divine Trinity," 233: "book I presents a more synthetic and metaphysical teaching on God, whereas book II becomes, at least from chapter 4 on, more polemical and engages the reader in a plurality of open questions."; Daley, "Origen's *De Principiis*," 14: "In what is generally accepted today as the first part of the work (1.1.-2.3), Origen gives a fairly straightforward exposition of doctrine. . . . The second part of the work clearly repeats this same sequence of themes—God, intelligent creation, and material creation—but in a distinctly different perspective. . . . the treatment here is both more explicitly exegetical . . . and more explicitly anti-Gnostic"; also Dorival, "Origène d'Alexandrie," 823: "an initial systematic exposition."

29 *Princ* 1.1.1, GK 98-100/GCS 16, 19-17, 4.

Origen's targets are Christian, since they derive their support from the Old and New Testament, and they believe that God is corporeal.[30] These are, as other places in Origen's writings make clear, those whom he calls "the simple" of the Church.[31] Gunnar af Hällström's detailed study of the role of "the simplices" in Origen's works has shown that they are "first and last treated by Origen as theological opponents, as critics of his exegesis and challengers of his speculations."[32] Such critics were not necessarily uneducated, although many certainly would have been. As Stroumsa notes, several learned early Christians, including Melito and Tertullian, had been influenced by Stoic metaphysics and the corresponding conception of God as "the purest of all bodies."[33] In the first cycle this group is targeted rather frequently.[34]

Why is it, however, that Origen targets the simple first and then the heretics, and with what does he take issue? We must bear in mind that Origen is about to link both interlocutors to one fundamental error: literal interpretation of Scripture (*Princ* 4.2.2). I contend that Origen perceives at least two prerequisites that must be put in place before he offers his understanding of Scripture, an understanding that will in turn render literal exegesis absurd and therefore overthrow both of his opponents simultaneously, precisely on the one ground

30 Gedaliahu Stroumsa, "The Incorporeality of God: Context and Implications of Origen's Position," *Religion* 13 (1983): 346.

31 *Hom 1-16 in Gen* 1.13, 3.2; *Cels* 7.27; see GK 99-101 n.2 and David L. Paulsen, "Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses," *Harvard Theological Review* 83.2 (1990): 105-16.

32 Gunnar af Hällström, *Fides Simpliciorum According to Origen of Alexandria* (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1984) 8. Literalism was such a constitutive feature of simple faith that "A simplicior who is not also a literalist would obviously not be a simplicior at all" (57).

33 Stroumsa 346, cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom* 5.16. I do not follow the view (Berchman, *From Philo to Origen*, 259, 276, 292; Stroumsa 346) that Origen has *only* "Stoic Christians" in mind and not the *simpliciores*, especially because Origen himself never makes this kind of distinction; see also Monique Alexandre, "Le statut des questions concernant la matière dans le *Peri Archôn*," in *Origeniana*, 68-9. The label "simple" has more to do with spiritual, not strictly educational, assessment; cf. Henri de Lubac, *History and Spirit: The Understanding of Scripture According to Origen* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007 [1950]) 94. On Melito, see Paulsen 111-113.

34 *Princ* 1.1 (God and soul are bodily), 1.3.3 (traducianism), 1.7.2 (sun, moon, stars are unchangeable). Further, it must be kept in mind that the fundamental problem with the simple, in Origen's view, is their rejection of divine incorporeality. Thus, he is at pains to discuss the incorporeality of the Father (1.1), the Son (1.2.2, 6), and the Holy Spirit (1.1.3, 1.3.4), all three together (1.6.4, 2.2.2), and even of souls (1.1.7). Even when they are not specifically named they still remain the targets.

they share. The first prerequisite is a grasp of a threefold metaphysics derived from the biblical doctrine of divine incorporeality (*Princ* 1.1.1-5). For if God is incorporeal and our minds can apprehend him, then our minds are also incorporeal, which is the second metaphysical substance, and so on (*Princ* 1.1.6-7). This initial premise addresses "the simple," who do not even accept the incorporeality of the divine nature.

Marcionites, on the other hand, affirm God's incorporeality. They enlist this idea in support of their rejection of the OT, since it is riddled with a number of crude, anthropomorphic portrayals of God.[35] So instead of detailing his threefold metaphysics in the second cycle, he focuses on the possibility of their unification—an aspect left conspicuously unsettled in the first cycle.[36] Thus Origen reserves his narration of the Incarnation of the Word for the second cycle (*Princ* 2.6). Though initially obscure in its anti-Marcionite import, it has great relevance for Origen's polemic; for it is here that the unification of the threefold metaphysics first occurs in *Peri Archon*, a theme emerging in the second cycle as a perennial heretical problem.[37]

The two cycles, therefore, target two primary interlocutors, and secure two premises essential to Origen's polemical overthrow of the literal interpretation of Scripture. The first premise, itself derived from Scripture, is an understanding of the threefold metaphysics of divine incorporeality ("Spirit"), created incorporeality ("soul"), and created corporeality ("body"). This is what the

35 *Princ* 2.4.3; Cf. Stroumsa 348.

36 Origen declares that divine incorporeal nature *cannot* mix with corporeality (*Princ* 1.1.6), yet in that same section we are told that created incorporeal nature, "mind" or "soul," *can* mix with bodies—to such an extent that disruption of the body can affect the power of the mind as it does, for example, with sea-sickness. How it is possible, then, that divine nature could ever interact with, much less be embodied within, corporeal nature is left entirely unexplained in the first cycle.

37 There are at least two other instances of the potential unity of body, soul, and spirit in the rest of the second cycle. First, in his discussion of the origin of the soul, Origen identifies the soul as "a kind of medium between the weak flesh and the willing spirit" (*Princ* 2.8.4, GK 396/GCS 162, 20-1: *quasi medium quiddam esse anima inter carnem infirmam et spiritum promptum*); cf. also 2.8.2. Second, at the end of his extensive defense of free will, he likewise describes the soul as "something intermediate between the flesh and spirit, undoubtedly serving and obeying one of the two, whichever it has chosen to obey" (*Princ* 3.4.2, GK 610/GCS 267, 1-3: *constat quod huius animae voluntas media quaedam est inter carnem et spiritum, uni sine dubio e duobus serviens et obtemperans, cuicumque obtemperare delegerit*). Thus the unification of the three metaphysical substances, which is *actual* in Christ but only *possible* in us through the exercise of virtue, becomes the metaphysical structure within which free will can exist. And of course defending free will against the heretics was something of a priority for Origen.

simple need to learn. The second is an understanding of the unification of the three, archetypically realized and demonstrated in the Incarnation. This is what both the simple and the heretics need to learn. Once these are in place, Origen can turn to the source of all errors.

Literalism: The Common Error (*Princ 4.1-2.3*)

Several scholars have rightly pointed out that Origen's discussion of Scripture in Book 4 is not a piece of abstract theory, but is given to instruct those who preach and teach Scripture in the Church (i.e. presbyters).[38] While it is appropriate to identify Origen's audience as a key influencing factor on his remarks about Scripture, it is perhaps more imperative to consider his interlocutors, if not because he himself frames his discussion as a response to them. Origen may be writing *for* his audience, but he is also writing *against* his interlocutors.

"We have not yet," says Origen near the start of Book 4, "discussed the divine character of the scriptures (τῶν γραφῶν ὡς θείων)."[39] This is the broad aim of *Princ* 4.1-3, while the specific goal of the first chapter is to offer "the reasons that influence us to regard them as divine writings."[40] Origen first argues that the Scriptures, both OT and NT, are in fact inspired.[41] Here we encounter standard early Christian arguments for the divine character of Scripture: the success of Moses and Christ among a variety of peoples (4.1.1-2), fulfillment of prophecy (4.1.2-5), the boldness of the apostolic mission (4.1.5), and even the profound feeling one gets when reading the texts (4.1.6).[42]

The second chapter, which contains Origen's threefold distinction of Scripture, no longer concerns proof of inspiration, but how Scripture should be understood in light of this inspiration. As Origen declares:

> it is [now] necessary to discuss the manner in which [the Scriptures] are to be read and understood (τῷ τρόπῳ τῆς ἀναγνώσεως καὶ νοήσεως αὐτῶν),

38 Daley, "Origen's *De Principiis*," 15-16; Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure*, 39-40; Dively Lauro, *Soul and Spirit*, 40-7.

39 *Princ* 4.1.1, GK 670/GCS 293, 1-2.

40 *Princ* 4.1.1, GK 670/GCS 293, 3-4: τὰ κινοῦντα ἡμᾶς ὡς περὶ θείων γραμμάτων εἰς τοῦτο παρατιθέμενοι).

41 Thus the Latin title given by Photius (*Bibl Cod* 8): *Quod scripturae divinitus inspiratae sunt* / "That the Scriptures have been divinely inspired"; GK 668.

42 C.f. Irenaeus, *Epid* 43-95, which focuses primarily on OT prophetic fulfillment in Christ and the authority of the apostolic mission.

> since many mistakes have been made in consequence of the method (τὴν ὁδὸν) by which the holy documents ought to be interpreted (ἐφοδεύειν) not having been discovered by the multitude.[43]

Notice, first of all, the *general* scope of the discussion. As others have noted, the "method" Origen is about to provide is not exactly what is meant today by the word "method," despite Butterworth's translation.[44] The words ὁδός, "way" or "approach," and νοήσις, "understanding" or "intelligibility," and especially ἐφοδεύειν, "to watch over," all indicate a much broader approach to Scripture than a precise exegetical procedure. Origen discloses a whole manner of approaching Scripture that includes but is not reducible to specific interpretative techniques.

Second, Origen's discussion is decidedly *polemical*. He proposes what follows against many who have "made mistakes" in their approach to Scripture, whom he here labels "the multitude" (τοῖς πολλοῖς).[45] He specifies: [1] the Jews (τῶν ἐκ περιτομῆς),[46] who fail to see prophetic fulfillment in Christ; [2] the heretics (τῶν αἱρέσεων),[47] who read the OT in such a way as to create an opposition between the God who inspired that text and the God who inspired the NT; and [3] the "simple" "who claim to belong to the Church" (οἱ ἀκεραιότεροι, τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας αὐχούντων τυγχάνειν) and believe in only one God, yet read Scripture so as to "believe such things about him as would not be believed by the most savage and unjust of men."[48]

"And the reason why all those we have mentioned hold false opinions," says Origen, "appears to be nothing else but this, that scripture is not understood in its spiritual sense, but is interpreted according to the bare letter (ἡ γραφὴ κατὰ τὰ πνευματικὰ μὴ νενοημένη, ἀλλ' ὡς πρὸς τὸ ψιλὸν γράμμα ἐξειλημμένη)."[49] Origen charges all his interlocutors, no matter how diverse, with one fundamental

43 *Princ* 4.2.1 (Butterworth 269, modified), GK 694-6/GCS 305, 10-306, 2.

44 Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure*, 2-4, 39.

45 Hällström 13 notes that Origen frequently uses this phrase to refer to the *simpliciores*. This seems to be the case here, since he goes on to include them specifically in his polemical scope. Indeed, Origen may be most concerned with this group, since he explicitly mentions them twice in the next several paragraphs (*Princ* 4.2.1, cited below, and 4.2.2), and will do so again (*Princ* 4.2.6).

46 *Princ* 4.2.1, GK 696/GCS 306, 3: "the ones from the circumcision," a Pauline phrase for "the Jews," e.g. Gal 2.12 and Titus 1.10.

47 *Princ* 4.2.1, GK 698/GCS 307, 4: "Those from the heretics."

48 *Princ* 4.2.1, GK 700/GCS 308, 5-8.

49 *Princ* 4.2.2 (Butterworth 271-2), GK 700/GCS 308, 8-11.

error: literalism. There is good reason, however, to think that Origen has only two of the three at the forefront of his mind, the "simple" and the Marcionites.[50] Whatever difficulty there might be in charging the Jews with literalism,[51] they do not fit the profile in this specific instance:

> we must explain to those who believe that the sacred books are not the works of men, but that they were composed and have come down to us as a result of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by the will of the Father of the universe through Jesus Christ, what are the methods of interpretation (ὁδοὺς ὑποδεικτέον) that appear right to us . . .[52]

Note that Origen's opponents not only believe in the inspiration of Scripture from the Spirit and by the Father, but also through Christ. While this can be

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50 As throughout *Peri Archon*, Origen's foremost "heretical" target here is Marcion, for he disdained figurative interpretations and commended literal readings, esp. of the OT; c.f. Heikki Räisänen, "Marcion," in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian 'Heretics'.* Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 76. Edited by Antti Marjanen & Petri Luomanen (Boston: Brill, 2005) 105, and Tertullian, *Adv Marc* 3.5-6. De Lubac, *History and Spirit*, 57, adds that Basilides also scorned figurative interpretation. Origen himself acknowledged the Marcionite distaste for allegory in *Comm in Mt* 15.3 and *Comm in Rom* 2.13. Of course it was precisely Marcion's refusal to interpret the OT allegorically that bolstered his criticism and rejection of it (*Princ* 2.4.3-4, 2.5.1-2). Yet we must note here that Marcion did not deny the inspiration of the OT in the sense of claiming that it was merely a human document (*Princ* 4.2.3); rather, he rejected the idea that the same God who inspired it was the Father of Jesus Christ, hence his assertion of two Gods (*Princ* 2.5.1). Valentinians, on the other hand, embraced allegory, as in Irenaeus, *Haer* 1.1.3, where he relays two allegorical interpretations utilized by Valentinians to support the doctrine of the thirty aeons (Lk 3.23 and Matt 20.1-16). See also *Jo* 2.155, 20.166. So Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures: A New Translation with Annotations and Introductions* (New York: Doubleday, 1987) 273: "The use of allegory is a characteristic of the Valentinian movement." Significantly, Origen's threefold distinction of Scripture, which will constitute his primary response to these "heretics" (*Princ* 4.2.4), itself suggests Marcion as the key heretical target. The only other Greek text we have of this doctrine, adorned with the same wording (*Phil* 1.30; see n.60), emerges in the context of those who, because they failed to appreciate the nature of Scripture, have "formed another God alongside the One giving the law and the prophets, alongside the One making heaven and earth" (my translation; Robinson 36), i.e. Marcion.

51 Peter W. Martens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 138-48, and esp. idem, "Why Does Origen Accuse the Jews of 'Literalism'? A Case Study of Christian Identity and Biblical Exegesis in Antiquity," *Adamantius* 13 (2007): 218-30.

52 *Princ* 4.2.2 (Butterworth 272), GK 700/GCS 308, 11-16.

said of the simple, and possibly the heretics, it cannot apply to Jews.[53] This confirms that Origen's two primary interlocutors in Book 4 are the same as they have been throughout the whole work: the simple and the Marcionites.[54]

53 Origen just said of the heretics: "[they] have not dared to disbelieve that [OT passages] are the writings of God, but believe them to belong to the Creator, whom they suppose the Jews worship" (*Princ* 4.2.1, GK 698/GCS 307, 10-12). Peter W. Martens, "Why Does Origen Refer to the Trinitarian Authorship of Scripture in Book 4 of *Peri Archon*?" *Vigiliae Christianae* 60 (2006): 1-8 argues that Origen's reference to the trinitarian authorship of Scripture here (and in *Princ* 4.2.7) has an openly anti-Jewish and anti-heretical intent. It is important to note, though, that while Origen effectively *disqualifies* Jewish interpretation by positing the agency of Jesus Christ, he *challenges* heretical interpretation precisely by invoking the Christ through whom the three metaphysical levels are unified. He thus demarcates his own view of Scripture from both, but in different ways. Martens's claim ("Trinitarian Authorship" 6) that "For Origen, claims about Scripture's authorship are intimately associated with expectations about Scripture's message" is correct, yet not just because the identity of the author is connected to the message, but also to the *form of the messenger*, i.e. the nature and form of Scripture, as will be argued below.

54 That the Jews are absent (or at least marginal) in Origen's polemical purview in *Peri Arhcon* is further confirmed by Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1997) 108, who notes that the Jews were nearly eradicated by the Romans from Alexandria during the revolt of 115-17 CE. Thus "much of the evidence used to establish a 'Jewish connection' between Origen and rabbinic teachers is probably attributable to the period after he took up residence in Caesarea" (Haas 106, with citations). Heine, *Origen*, 29 adds that whatever population did remain after 117 CE would have suffered still more loss as a result of Bar Kochba's revolt in 135 CE. Hence N.R.M. de Lange, *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976) 8 does not see many "references in [Origen's] early works to Jews in Alexandria." *Pace* Mark Edwards, *Origen Against Plato* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002) 12, who claims: "No city of the Mediterranean world played host to such a large population of Jews as Alexandria in the time of Origen." He notes (39, n.23) de Lange's reservations about the presence of Jews in Alexandria in Origen's day, but responds only by citing Origen's few references to a former master whom he calls "the Hebrew" (e.g. *Princ* 1.3.4, 4.3.14). But this is far from sufficient evidence to support Edwards's massive assertion, and ought to be counterbalanced with Origen's comment that Jewish believers are rare in Alexandria (*Jo* 1.7). Two further observations secure the marginalization of the Jews as significant interlocutors in this particular text: [1] as Martens, "Why Does Origen Accuse the Jews of 'Literalism'?" 223-4 demonstrates, Origen's anti-literalist polemic against the Jews actually targets three specific kinds of literal readings: those supporting a continuance of literal adherence to the Jewish Law and customs, those used to reject Christ as the fulfillment of OT prophecy, and those that imply an anthropomorphic or corporeal conception of God. Martens also notes that the third is "linked to the Jews much more infrequently than the previous two" (224; he cites *Hom 1-16 in Gen* 3.1-2 and *Princ* 1.1.2, but only the former explicitly mentions

Origen's threefold distinction of Scripture amounts to more than mere assertion of literalism's error. It *demonstrates* literalism's falsity by drawing on key premises previously defended against the same adversaries. An allusion to such an approach lies in what follows the above quotation, where the "right methods" of understanding Scripture are said to come from those "who keep to the rule of the heavenly Church of Jesus Christ through the succession of the Apostles."[55] This "rule," derived from Christ and codified in the "apostolic teaching," was enumerated in the Preface and then, as we observed, explicated in the two cycles of Books 1-3.[56] Thus, the "right methods" of scriptural interpretation are integral to the rule, or, put differently, Origen contextualizes his allegorical hermeneutic within the metaphysical and incarnational themes propagated in the Preface and expounded in the two cycles.[57]

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the Jews; indeed, Origen elsewhere claims that divine incorporeality is a Jewish doctrine; *Cels* 1.15, 21). While Origen evokes the second (rejecting Christ as prophetic fulfillment) in this context (*Princ* 4.2.1), the third concern dominates the discussion: the incorporeality of God is not only a major theme of *Peri Archon* as a whole (n.77), but is strategically linked with spiritual interpretation in both the Preface (*Princ* 1.pref.8) and at the end of the hermeneutical discussion (*Princ* 4.3.15). This is clearly his concern with heretical and simple literalism in *Princ* 4.2.1, which suggests their polemical primacy; [2] as Martens, "Why Does Origen Accuse the Jews of 'Literalism'?" 225 n.41 also observes, "it is quite rare" that Origen uses the "rule" of the Church against Jewish literalism, and indeed *Princ* 4.2.1-2 seems to be the only occasion where he does so. The rarity of this tactic in Origen's anti-literalist polemic against the Jews likely confirms that they are simply not his primary concern. Origen may have evoked "the Jews," as he does elsewhere (e.g. *Hom 1-16 in Gen* 6.1), as polemically beneficial, scandalizing rhetoric; cf. Jean Daniélou, *Origen*. Trans. Walter Mitchell (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955) 155-6.

55 *Princ* 4.2.2 (Butterworth 272), GK 700/GCS 308, 15-16: ἐξομένοις τοῦ κανόνος τῆς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ κατὰ διαδοχὴν τῶν ἀποστόλων οὐρανίου ἐκκλησίας / *observantibus illam regulam disciplinamque, quam ab Iesu Christo traditam sibi apostoli per successionem posteris quoque suis suis caelestem ecclsiam docentibus tradiderunt.*

56 *Princ* 1.pref.2-4, where the "unmistakable rule" (GK 84/GCS 8, 19: *certam lineam manifestamque regulam*) is said to be for those who learn truth only from Christ, is passed down in the Church from the apostles "in unbroken succession" (GK 84/GCS 8, 26: *per successionis ordinem ab apostolis tradita*) and is thus the content of "apostolic teaching" (GK 86/GCS 9, 12: *praedicationem apostolicam*).

57 One might object that Origen's reference to the rule here need not include the whole of Books 1-3, but only the specific statements on Scripture found in the rule at *Princ* 1.pref.8. It is crucial, however, to recognize that for Origen the rule and its logical explication are inseparable, that, as he says, the apostles remained deliberately silent "as to the how and why" (also called "the grounds") of much of their teaching in order to spur on deeper reflection (*Princ* 1.pref.3). As Origen explains at the end of the Preface, his goal is to "construct a single body of doctrine" from both the clear teachings of Scripture (= the apostles

Metaphysics: The Body, Soul, and Spirit of Scripture

Metaphysical Claim of 4.2.4

After observing that many literalists admit some kind of hidden sense in inspired Scripture (*Princ* 4.2.3), Origen proceeds to disclose the "right way . . . of approaching the scriptures and gathering their meaning," the task promised in *Princ* 4.2.1-2.[58] Appealing to Proverbs 22.20-21, "Do thou portray them in a threefold way in counsel and knowledge, that thou mayest answer words of truth to those who question thee,"[59] Origen offers his threefold distinction of Scripture with these words:

> One must therefore portray the meaning of the sacred writings in a threefold way upon one's own soul, so that the simple man may be edified by what we may call the flesh of the scripture (σαρκὸς τῆς γραφῆς), this name being given to the obvious interpretation (τὴν πρόχειρον ἐκδοχήν); while the man who has made some progress may be edified by its soul, as it

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= the rule) *and* the conclusions that "follow logically from them when rightly understood" (*Prince* 1.pref.10, GK 98, GCS 16, 14-15: *vel quas ex consequentiae ipsius indagine ac recti tenore reppererit*).

58 *Princ* 4.2.4, GK 708/GCS 312, 1-2: Ἡ τοίνυν φαινομένη ἡμῖν ὁδὸς τοῦ πῶς δεῖ ἐντυγχάνειν ταῖς γραφαῖς καὶ τὸν νοῦν αὐτῶν ἐκλαμβάνειν. That *Princ* 4.2.3 is not yet the discussion promised in *Princ* 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 is clear from the phrases present here in 4.2.4 like "the right way . . . as it appears to us" and "their [the scriptures'] understanding," which clearly allude to 4.2.2 and 4.2.1 (i.e. both mention ὁδός; cp. 4.2.1, νοήσεως with 4.2.4, νοῦν). What we have in *Princ* 4.2.3 are reasons that ought to cause initial hesitation before one discredits spiritual interpretations of Scripture. After recounting some of Scripture's "dark sayings" and obscure books (e.g. John's Apocalypse), Origen warns: "Seeing, therefore, that these things are so, and that thousands of men make mistakes, it is dangerous for us when we read to declare lightly that we understand" (*Princ* 4.2.3, GK 706/GCS 311, 5-6: οὐκ ἀκίνδυνον ἐν τῷ ἀναγινώσκειν εὐχερῶς ἀποφαίνεσθαι νοεῖν).

59 *Princ* 4.2.4 (Butterworth 275), GK 708/GCS 312, 5-7: 'καὶ σὺ δὲ ἀπόγραψαι αὐτὰ τρισσῶς ἐν βουλῇ καὶ γνώσει, τοῦ ἀποκρίνασθαι λόγους ἀληθείας τοῖς προβαλλομένοις σοι'. Intriguingly, προβαλλομένοις carries a much more antagonistic connotation than Butterworth's "question," literally meaning, "to throw or cast before," and more figuratively, "to put forward an argument" or even "to accuse or denounce" (LSJ, προβάλλω, s.v.). It may be the case, therefore, that Origen gravitates to this verse not only because it mentions the threefold distinction of Scripture, but also because it counsels that this distinction be given in a volatile context—when people are "arguing with" or even "accusing" you. This comports well with the hostile circumstances surrounding the composition of *Peri Archon* as a whole, as well as the evocation of the polemical targets in the immediate context, particularly the simple of the Church.

> were (τῆς ὡσπερεὶ ψυχῆς αὐτῆς); and the man who is perfect . . . this man may be edified by the spiritual law (τοῦ πνευματικοῦ νόμου), which has 'a shadow of the good things to come'. For just as man consists of body, soul and spirit, so in the same way does the scripture, which has been prepared by God to be given for man's salvation (ὥσπερ γὰρ ὁ ἄνθρωπος συνέστηκεν ἐκ σώματος καὶ ψυχῆς καὶ πνεύματος, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ ἡ οἰκονομηθεῖσα ὑπὸ θεοῦ εἰς ἀνθρώπων σωτηρίαν δοθῆναι γραφή).[60]

The traditional interpretation of this text has the "body," "soul," and "spirit" referring to three hermeneutical levels of meaning in Scripture.[61] Surely there is support for this perspective, since, for example, the "flesh of Scripture" is said to be the name of the "obvious reception" (τὴν πρόχειρον ἐκδοχήν).[62] But beyond this oblique allusion, there is yet to be any mention of the "meanings" or

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60 *Princ* 4.2.4 (Butterworth 275-6), GK 708-10/GCS 312, 7-313, 4. That the precise wording of this doctrine is significant for Origen is confirmed by another passage that contains the same threefold description of Scripture, a Greek fragment from Origen's fifth homily on Leviticus, from the Philocalia (*Phil* 1.30; Robinson 36): ἐπεὶ οὖν συνέστηκεν ἡ γραφὴ καὶ αὐτὴ οἱονεὶ ἐκ σώματος μὲν τοῦ βλεπομένου, ψυχῆς δὲ τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ νοουμένης καὶ καταλαμβανομένης, καὶ πνεύματος τοῦ κατὰ τὰ ὑποδείγματα καὶ σκιὰν τῶν ἐπουρανίων.

61 August Zöllig, *Die Inspirationslehre des Origenes: Ein Beitrag zur Dogmengeschichte* (Freiburg: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1902) 100-114; Eugène de Faye, *Origen and His Work* (trans. Fred Roghtwell; London: Allen & Unwin, 1926) 38-42; Henri de Lubac, *History and Spirit*, 159-71; idem, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture: Volume 1*. Trans. Mark Sebanc (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998 [1959]) 142-50; R.M. Grant, *The Letter and the Spirit* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957) 94-5; R.P.C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959) 235-58, esp. 243-6; M.F. Wiles, "Origen as a Biblical Scholar," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*. Eds. P.R. Ackroyd and C.F. Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) 465-70; Daniélou, *Origen*, 161; idem, *The Gospel in Hellenistic Culture*. Trans. John Austin Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973) 283-8; Henri Crouzel, *Origen* (Trans. A.S. Worrall. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989 [1985]) 75-9.

62 Even here it is important to emphasize the general sense of Origen's vocabulary. Where Butterworth has "obvious interpretation," τὴν πρόχειρον ἐκδοχήν, the sense is much more basic: "the obvious succession, or receiving" (LSJ, ἐκδοχή, s.v.). Cp. *Princ* 4.3.11, GK 746/GCS 331, 13-15: ἐπιστήσωμεν εἰ μὴ τὸ βλεπόμενον τῆς γραφῆς καὶ τὸ ἐπιπόλαιον αὐτῆς καὶ πρόχειρον/ "Let us consider if Scripture's visage and its surface and obviousness . . ." (my translation). The obvious "interpretation," then, is first of all a kind of encounter, an apprehension of "that which is seen of Scripture" or "Scripture's visage" (see also *Princ* 4.2.8, GK 724). The point is not to reduce interpretation to this, but to draw attention to the metaphysical dimension of "interpretations." There is certainly a "narration" that takes place (e.g. *Princ* 4.2.5, GK 714/GCS 315, 6 and 15: διήγησις), but this is inseparable from a metaphysical or "apprehensional" encounter with Scripture itself (see below).

"senses" of Scripture.[63] Even more conspicuous are statements validating Karen Jo Torjesen's pedagogical and soteriological thesis that "The threefoldness . . . represents stages in the progression of the soul," and so "the three dimensions of Scripture—body, soul and spirit—correspond to the way Scripture shapes the process of salvation." Thus Scripture's "body" is given so "the simple man may be edified," its "soul" for one who "has made some progress," and its "spirit" for the "perfect." Indeed, Origen explicitly declares that Scripture as a whole has been given "for man's salvation."[64]

Yet Origen's language suggests more. It suggests not just *how* Scripture functions (i.e. by providing three different levels of meaning). Nor does it merely describe *why* Scripture was given (i.e. to spur each soul toward perfect communion with God). It designates *what* Scripture is: "just as man *consists of* body, soul, and spirit, so in the same way does scripture." "Consists of" is Butterworth's translation of the Greek phrase συνέστηκεν ἐκ, which means "has been composed out of," "has been combined from," or "has been united from," i.e. it implies material causality.[65] This phrase therefore denotes a thing's *nature*(*s*) or *constitution*. Indeed, this is precisely how the Latin equivalent of συνίστημι, *constare*, is repeatedly used throughout *Peri Archon*: the divine nature "is" the kind of thing that cannot mix with corporeality;[66] the world is "made up of" rational and corporeal beings, and the universe as a whole is

63 Hence Dively Lauro, *The Soul and Spirit*, 87-93 and "Reconsidering Origen's Two Higher Senses of Scriptural Meaning: Identifying the Psychic and Pneumatic Senses," *Studia Patristica* 34 (2001): 307, n.3. The terms Origen usually employs to designate something like a "meaning" or "sense" of Scripture do not appear until *after* 4.2.4: e.g. τὸν ψυχικὸν καὶ τὸν πνευματικὸν λόγον . . . τὸ σωματικὸν / "the soul-like and the spirit-like meaning . . . the body-like" (*Princ* 4.2.5, GK 712-14/GCS 314, 13-315, 1; cf. *Princ* 4.3.5, GK 746); διήγησις / "narration" (*Princ* 4.2.6, previous note).

64 Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure*, 35-48 and Dively Lauro, *The Soul and Spirit*, 47-50 both highlight Origen's persistent emphasis on the soteriological purpose of Scripture in *Princ* 4.1-3, esp. 4.2.4 and 7. Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 6 shows that Origen contextualizes both the subject and object of scriptural interpretation within "the drama of salvation."

65 LSJ, συνίστημι, s.v. defines the past/perfect tense with the preposition ἐκ/ἐξ as "*to come* or *be put together,* of parts." This preposition carries great metaphysical significance, since, as Origen himself notes in his *Commentary on John*, it indicates in such contexts a thing's material cause, "that from which something comes," which is one sense of a thing's ἀρχή (*Jo* 1.103; Blanc 114: τὸ ἐξ οὗ); cf. also n.3. On the metaphysical significance of prepositions see Robert M. Berchman, "Origen on *The Categories*: A Study in Later Platonic First Principles," in *Origeniana Quinta*, 238-40.

66 *Princ* 1.1.6, GK 110/GCS 22, 1-3: *quod oportet totius corporeae ammixtionis alienum una sola, ut ita dixerim, deitatis specie constare.*

"made up of heaven and earth";[67] the Greeks say that the soul is "made up of many parts";[68] man "consists" primarily in soul or mind,[69] though he can be said "to be made up of soul, body, and 'vital spirit.'"[70]

This last text recalls Origen's threefold distinction of Scripture in *Princ* 4.2.4, for there man is also said to be "made up out of" (*constare* and *ex*/συνίστημι and ἐκ) body, soul, and spirit. In both cases Origen proffers a metaphysical description of what constitutes a human being. He does the same here for Scripture ("in exactly the same way"/τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ).[71] Indeed, "body," "soul," and "spirit" frequently designate the three metaphysical substances or natures of all reality in *Peri Archon*, a point addressed below. What is less apparent, though, is the audacity of the claim of their union in Scripture. To appreciate

67 *Princ* 2.1.1, GK 284/GCS 106, 13-16: *In quo hoc primum evidenter apparet, quod omnis status eius, qui est varius ac diversus, ex rationabilibus et divinioribus naturis et ex diversis corporibus constet, sed et ex mutis animantibus, id est feris bestiis et pecudibus et avibus atque omnibus . . .*; *Princ* 2.3.6, GK 316/GCS 121, 20-21: *Dicitur mundus etiam ista universitas, quae ex caelo constat et terra, sicut Paulus ait . . .* (1 Cor 7.31).

68 *Princ* 3.4.1, GK 604/GCS 264, 8: *ex pluribus tamen constet . . .*

69 *Princ* 2.11.5, GK 448/GCS 188, 5-6: *id est vel de homine vel de anima hominis vel de mente, vel ex quibuscumque illis homo constat . . .*

70 *Princ* 3.4.1, GK 602/GCS 263, 21-22: *id est hominibus, qui ex anima constamus et corpore ac 'spiritu vitali'. . . .* Cf. also *Princ* 3.1.2, 3.4.2.

71 Although Dively Lauro defends the thesis that Origen consistently upholds the three senses of Scripture, she does not see them defined in *Princ* 4.2.4: "In the past scholars have tended to focus on the explanation of the anthropological structure in DP 4.2.4 as the locus of the definitions. However, a reading of Origen's presentation as a whole clarifies that he provides actual definitions for the three senses in DP 4.2.5-6, *after* his explanation of Scripture's anthropological structure in DP 4.2.4" ("Reconsidering Origen's Two Higher Senses," 307, n.3, original emphasis). The anthropological analogy suggests that Scripture's purpose is to model the perfect order of the human being—the body is subject to the soul that chooses to be subject to the spirit—and so guiding its hearers through the ever-progressing stages of salvation and perfection. She is not asserting that the threefold distinction in *Princ* 4.2.4 fails to refer to the senses *at all*, but that their identification as specific senses does not come until after this initial "anthropological structure," derived from Origen's discussions in *Princ* 3.1-4, is posited as the framework and goal of Scripture. I take Dively Lauro's lead in pushing the context of *Princ* 4.2.4 back to the anthropological discussions in Book 3, only I push it back even further to include the whole of the two cycles, specifically Origen's discussions of metaphysics (*Princ* 1.1) and the Incarnation (*Princ* 2.6). This move reveals that Origen here divulges not only Scripture's "anthropological structure," but more directly its "Christological structure" (these are inseparable for Origen, since Christ is the Image "according to which" man was made; cf. *Jo* 1.105). See further n.97.

this claim, we must survey the metaphysics disclosed in the earlier parts of the work.

Metaphysics of 'Body', 'Soul', and 'Spirit' in Princ

In the first chapter of *Peri Archon*, the first discourse on God the Father, Origen argues[72] for a threefold metaphysics derived from the notion of divine incorporeality, obviously anathema to the "simple" who conceive of God as in some sense corporeal:

> God therefore must not be thought to be any kind of body (*corpus aliquod*), nor to exist in a body, but to be a simple intellectual existence (*intellectualis natura simplex*), admitting in himself of no addition whatever, so that he cannot be believed to have in himself a more or a less, but is Unity (μονάς), or if I may so say, Oneness (ἑνάς) throughout, and the mind and fount from which originates all intellectual existence or mind (*et mens ac fons, ex quo initium totius intellectualis naturae vel mentis est*). Now mind (*mens*) does not need physical space (*loco corporeo*) in which to move and operate, nor does it need a magnitude discernible by the senses, nor bodily shape or colour, nor anything else whatever like these, which are suitable to bodies and matter (*quae corporis vel materiae propria sunt*). Accordingly that simple and wholly mental existence (*natura illa simplex et tota mens*) can admit no delay or hesitation in any of its movements or operations; for if it did so, the simplicity of its divine nature (*divinae naturae simplicitas*) would appear to be in some degree limited and impeded by such an addition, and that which is the first principle of all things (*principium omnium*) would be found to be composite and diverse, and would be many and not one; since only the species of deity (*deitatis specie*), if I may so call it, has the privilege of existing apart from all material intermixture (*quod oportet totius corporeae ammixtionis alienum una sola . . . constare*).[73]

72 Origen finds the Pauline (Col 1.15-17) and Johannine (Jn 1.1-3) formula of great utility as scriptural attestation for his threefold metaphysics: "all things were created through Him"—referring especially to the Son—"things visible and invisible" (*esse omnia, visibilia et invisibilia*), e.g. *Princ* 4.3.15, GK 778/GCS 374, 15-16. See also *Princ* 1.7.1, 2.11.7, 3.5.1, 3.6.7, 4.4.2-3. Whatever the provenance of Origen's metaphysics, it is important to emphasize that, for him, Scripture itself yields and/or verifies his metaphysical schema. Cf. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen*, 188-90, 252-3; Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure* 36.

73 *Princ* 1.1.6, GK 110/GCS 21, 10–22, 1-3. Rufinus has preserved the Greek μονάς and ἑνάς, both being a *terminus technicus* of the philosophical tradition; cf. Butterworth 10 n.1. *Princ* 3.6.7 also provides a short summary of Origen's threefold metaphysics.

Here we have the three essential metaphysical substances[74] that recur in *Peri Archon*. The divine nature does not exist in any kind of body, and as the "fount" of all "intellectual natures" or "minds" is wholly beyond all things. The singular transcendence of God's nature is important enough that Origen associates the title of the entire work with it: God transcends all created things and is thus properly "the first principle of all things."[75] As the first principle, God—particularly the Father, but also the Son and Spirit in their consubstantiality with the Father[76]—is supremely incorporeal, which is the first major polemical premise argued against the simple of the church in the first cycle (though still a perennial theme of *Peri Archon*).[77] Indeed, the divine nature surpasses not only space, but time.[78] For Origen, this also corresponds

74 All three are called "substance" (*substantia*) or "nature" (*natura*): Spirit/God/Divine: *Princ* 1.1.6, 1.2.6 (Son), 1.3.4 (Holy Spirit), 1.6.4 (Trinity), 2.4.3 (Trinity), 2.6.4, 3.6.1, 4.3.15, 4.4.2; Soul/Mind/Rational/Intellectual: *Princ* 1.pref.5, 1.1.6, 1.7.1, 2.8.1, 3.5.4, 3.6.7, 4.3.14, 4.4.9; Body/Matter: 1.7.5, 2.1.4, 2.2.2, 3.4.1, 3.6.6, 4.4.6. My brief resume of Origen's threefold metaphysics corresponds to Berchman's (*From Origen to Philo*, 117-164) detailed treatment thusly: "Spirit" or divine incorporeal nature = the "Realm of the 'Ones'"; "Soul" or created incorporeal nature = the "psychic realm" of the "created realm"; "Body" or created corporeal nature = the "material realm" of the "created realm."

75 Both *initium* and *principium* serve as translations of ἀρχή, and certainly *principium omnium* ought to be understood in this way. Significantly, the only other clear allusion to the title occurs in the context of divine transcendence and divine incorporeality; *Princ* 4.3.15, GK 780/GCS 347, 19-20.

76 Berchman, *From Origen to Philo*, 129: "Each member of the hypostatic triad exists separately and differently from the other, but they all share the same substance."

77 When Origen recounts the "great and important" questions upon which Christians so disappointingly differ, he reserves the pride of place to the nature of God himself (*Princ* 1.pref.2) and raises the specific question of divine incorporeality in the "rule of faith"—interestingly placed after the Church's teaching on Scripture (*Princ* 1.pref.8)—conceding that the Greek word ἀσώματον, "incorporeality," is unknown to Scripture. He sets out to prove that divine incorporeality is a scriptural teaching and so addresses "how God himself is to be conceived," a point scandalously absent "in the teaching" of the Church (*Princ* 1.pref.9, GK 96/GCS 15, 20-5). Stroumsa 345 notes that the notion of divine incorporeality was "in no way original" to Origen, since many Platonists (e.g. Albinus) and even Christians had utilized it (e.g. Justin, Athenagoras, Clement). Nevertheless, divine incorporeality enjoys "a central role" in "the overall structure of his thought." Although the specific Greek word ἀσώματον emerges on only three occasions (*Princ* 1.pref.8-9, 2.3.6, 4.3.15), references to divine incorporeality (as opposed to created incorporeal natures like minds and souls) permeate the work: *Princ* 1.1.3, 1.1.4, 1.1.6, 1.1.8, 1.2.2, 1.2.6, 1.3.4, 1.6.4, 2.2.2, 2.4.3, 2.6.3-4, 3.6.1, 4.3.15, 4.4.1-2, 4.4.4; cf. also *Jo* 2.195, *De Or.* 23.3, *Hom 1-16 in Gen* 1.13, 3.1; *Cels* 1.21, etc.

78 Beyond space (incorporeal): *Princ* 1.1.3 (H.S.), 1.1.6-8, 1.2.6 (Father and Son), 2.4.3; Beyond time (eternal): *Princ* 1.2.2, 1.3.4 (H.S.), 1.4.4-5, 2.2.1 (Trinity), 4.4.1 (Trinity); cf. GK 169 n.12,

to the metaphysics of "Spirit"—an appellation for which he finds scriptural support in John 4, and which is established at the start of *Peri Archon* (*Princ* 1.1.4), for "God is Spirit."[79]

Further down the metaphysical scale, though closely associated with the "fount," is "mind." Mind (or "soul"),[80] like God himself, is strictly incorporeal, not having the properties proper to "bodies and matter." But unlike God, soul is

789 n.16 who note that some, like de Faye, have doubted the authenticity of the trinitarian passages, but conclude that "these [doubts] are at best directed toward the details of the trinitarian expression," as opposed to the idea of divine transcendence of temporal language, which is quite at home within Origen's thought. Origen's conception of the creaturely status of the Holy Spirit, however, remains obscure. Passages such as *Jo* 2.73-9 at least indicate that he thought that the Holy Spirit "has been made through the Word" (my translation; Blanc 254: διὰ τοῦ λόγου γενομένων). In *Princ* 1.pref.4 Origen takes it as an open question whether or not the Spirit ought to be considered made or unmade, and Rufinus presents Origen opposing the creatureliness of the Holy Spirit in *Princ* 1.3.3. However, there are two reasons why a precise understanding of Origen's doctrine is irrelevant to my thesis: [1] even if the Holy Spirit in some sense "was made," he is "now" beyond all temporal designation, as the passages cited make clear; [2] the Spirit is clearly said to be unable to directly mix with material bodies and to be equal to the divinity of the Word in *Princ* 2.6.3-4. Thus whatever Origen's precise conception of the ἀρχή of the Spirit, it does not change the Spirit's current metaphysical status as a constituent of the divine incorporeal nature.

79 The metaphysics of "Spirit" are always the metaphysics of divine (incorporeal) nature. When Origen narrates the Incarnation, for instance, the "Spirit" is equated with "all the fullness of deity" that dwelled within Christ as the Word (*Princ* 2.6.4, GK 364-6/GCS 144, 2-6). He understands the "spirit" (*spiritus*) of the Pauline notion of being made "one spirit" (*unus spiritus*, 1 Cor 6.17)—a phrase quoted four times in connection with the Incarnation—as "God," since elsewhere he specifically equates *spiritus* and *deus* (*Princ* 3.6.6). On the divinity of the Spirit, cf. *Jo* 2.76 and Peter W. Martens, "Holy Spirit," in *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*. Edited by John Anthony McGuckin (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004) 125-8, esp. 125-6. True, Origen distinguishes the divine and human spirits (divine: *Princ* 1.1.4, 1.3.4, 2.6.3-4, 2.7, 2.11.5; human: *Princ* 1.3.4, 1.8.4, 2.10.7, 3.4.1-2, 3.6.6; *Dial* 6.23-8.20), but, as Crouzel (*Origen* 88) argues, for Origen (*Princ* 4.4.5) the human "spirit is the *divine element* present in man" and thus "being a gift of God, it is not strictly speaking a part of the human personality"; cf. also idem, "L'anthropologie d'Origène dans la perspective du combat spirituel," *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 31 (1955): 364-85; idem, "L'anthropolgie d'Origène: de l'arche au telos," 38; J. Dupuis, *L'esprit de l'homme. Etude sur l'anthropologie religieuse d'Origène.* Collection Museum Lessianum, section théologique 62 (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1967) 92-109.

80 Origen employs "soul" right after (*Princ* 1.1.7). On the relationship between "soul" and "mind" see *Princ* 1.1.6-7, 2.11.5.

created and so subject to time.[81] "Soul," moreover, designates the human species of the genus "rational nature," which includes angels, demons, and other powers.[82] It is the soul's likeness to God, especially its incorporeality, which enables human perception of God, and yet it is the createdness it shares with "body" that limits such perception.[83] Having metaphysical properties of divine and corporeal natures, the soul can participate in both, and it is precisely this both/and (or either/or) potentiality that constitutes the metaphysical framework of free will.[84] "Soul," therefore, designates, *inter alia*,[85] the metaphysical substance in humanity that shares incorporeality with the divine substance and temporality with corporeal substance, and so is the appropriate medium between them.[86]

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81 *Princ* 1.pref.7, 1.3.3, 1.7.1, 2.1.1, 2.3.6, 2.9.1, 3.6.7, 4.3.14, 4.4.6. P. Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time*. VCS 77 (Boston: Brill, 2006) 72-3 observes that even Plato did not make such a radical distinction between the mind and God.

82 Origen most often describes "human being" as a union of body and soul; cf. *Princ* 1.1.6, 4.2.7, 4.4.4. On "rational nature," cf. esp. *Princ* 1.4.2; 1.5.1, and *Princ* 1.8.2-4, 2.1.2, 3.5.4, 4.4.9; *Jo* 2.146.

83 *Princ* 1.1.7, GK 114/GCS 24, 13-21. Cf. *Hom 1-16 in Gen* 1.13, where Origen identifies the *imago dei* in humanity with the incorporeal element, the "inner man." Origen distinguishes between the "image" that was "made" according to the true Image, Christ, and the "body" which was "formed" from the slime of the earth. On the way Origen develops this further in his *Commentary on Genesis*, see Roland J. Teske, S.J., "Origen and Augustine's First Commentary on Genesis," in *Origeniana Quinta*, 179-85.

84 Two passages emphasize the *moral* role the soul plays between the weak and seductive "flesh" (*carnem*) and the (more?) divine "spirit" (*spiritus*), *Princ* 2.8.4 and 3.4.2. In these passages the "soul" or the "will of the soul" is said to serve either one or the other through the acts it produces, while the soul itself is neither by nature. *Princ* 2.6.3, however, contains the only direct discussion of the soul as a *metaphysical* medium between body and Spirit. This is significant, of course, for *Princ* 4.2.4 (see below).

85 Cf. *Princ* 2.8.1-2, 3.1.3 for a more functional or psychological definition of the soul as the substance that discriminates between images (φανταστική) and directs "impulse" (ὁρμητική).

86 D.G. Bostock, "Origen's Philosophy of Creation," in *Origeniana Quinta*, 254-5, drawing on Origen's *Commentary on Genesis* (in a section written before *Princ*), notes that for Origen souls are like the cosmic "firmament" of Genesis 1, which lies between the timeless (and incorporeal?) creation above and the temporal, corporeal creation below. Cf. also Berchman, "Origen on *The Categories*: A Study in Later Platonic First Principles," 231-52, who describes Origen's metaphysics in terms of Aristotelian categories, which, while adding nuance (e.g. quality, quantity, relation, motion), does not considerably differ from my emphasis on time and space. "Space," for instance, includes the categories of "place" and "magnitude." Berchman does, however, further describe the gradation *within* the divine incorporeal nature between the Father (=substance), Son (=substance, quality, quantity,

The last metaphysical level, corporeality[87] or "body" (*corpus*/σώμα),[88] is

relation), and the Holy Spirit (=same as Son). But none of these include time or space ("place" and "magnitude"), which further validates focus on these properties.

87 Origen distinguishes between "body" and "matter" (ὕλη/*materia*) in *Princ* 2.1.4, GK 290/GCS 109, 20-3, though the latter is never actually apart from the former. For this relationship, see D.G. Bostock, "Quality and Corporeity," in *Origeniana: Second colloque international des etudes origéniennes* (*Bari, 20-23 septembre 1977*). Textes rassemblés par Henri Crouzel—Antonio Quacquarelli (Bari: Quaderni di "Vetera Christianorum," 1980) 323-37, esp. 324-9; cf. also *Princ* 1.2.12, 1.4.3-5, and *Jo* 13.21. Berchman, *From Origen to Philo*, 120, 133, 309 n. 135, thinks Origen's view is that matter "is eternal insofar as it is not created in time," and so does "not support a theory of *creation ex nihilo*." Moreover, Origen confronts us "with an anomaly" in that he [1] denies the eternality of matter (*Princ* 1.3.3, 2.1.4-5, 4.4.5-6) and yet [2] affirms the eternality of the cosmos *as prefigured* in eternal Wisdom (*Princ* 1.4.5). Berchman's resolution is that, for Origen, "God is eternally active and eternally creates all things" (309 n. 135). A more precise resolution is that Origen holds at least two notions of "creation," one that denotes a generative act (i.e. the Son and perhaps the Spirit) and another that indicates an act of transference from *potentia* to *actus* (i.e. all created things), which happens *ex nihilo* by definition (since what is potential is not actual) and in time. Three observations confirm this. First, that it is *ex nihilo*: Origen cites a set of classic *ex nihilo* texts (2 Macc 7.28; *Hermas* 1.1; cf. *Princ* 1.3.3 and *Jo* 1.103), including Psalm 148.5, and deduces that the form *and* substance of corporeality are created from nothing: "For the statement 'He spake and they were made' seems to point to the substance (*substantiam*) of things that exist, whereas 'he commanded and they were created' seems to be spoken of the qualities by which the substance itself was moulded into form (*quibus substantia ipsa formata est*)" (*Princ* 2.1.5, GK 294/GCS 11, 23-5). "Substance" here indicates matter, since Origen just spoke of matter receiving the qualities in God's act of formation (*Princ* 2.1.4). There it was said to have its own existence (GK 290/GCS 110-11: *materia propria ratione extra has esse invenitur*), here it is "made" (along with the qualities) from nothing. Hence Alexandre (73) speaks of "the creation of the substance and the qualities." Thus Berchman's (133) suggestion that for Origen formless matter pre-existed as "non-being" fails to recognize that "creation" (*qua* transference) happens for substance (i.e. matter) and form (via qualities) simultaneously. That is, Origen's "non-existence" is not simply equivalent to certain middle-platonic, Artistotelian-inspired concepts of "non-being." Second, that matter's "creation" occurs in time follows from its interminable mutability. This point is essential to Origen's anti-heretical polemic, as Berchman (p. 309 n. 135) also notices, for they used the eternal God/eternal matter distinction to buttress their views on the inherent evil and fixity of material nature (Tertullian, *Adv Marc* 1.15; hence *Princ* 4.4.6 continually returns to the mutability of matter; cf. Alexandre 68). To rebut this view, Origen must argue for the createdness of everything outside the Godhead in terms of *a change from potentiality to actuality*, for this is what establishes the *inherent mutability* of all created natures (*Princ* 4.4.8; cf. n. 90). Finally, Origen's "anomaly" (i.e. "eternal" creation prefigured in Wisdom without the existence of original matter) actually reinforces his view of the temporal createdness of matter, for it refutes the only cogent

constitutive of space itself and is physically sensible (i.e. has color, shape, magnitude).[89] Like souls, bodies are created and so subject to time and progression,[90] but unlike both incorporeal natures (divine and created) they are inherently spatial and compound.[91] "Body" is therefore the metaphysical inverse of "Spirit," which yields this crucial point, left unresolved in the first cycle: being utterly simple and therefore beyond space and time, the divine nature ("Spirit") cannot directly "mingle with" corporeality ("body"), presumably because the latter is subject to space and time. Such a mixture is properly *alienum* to the nature of "deity." It is only in the second cycle, which presupposes the threefold metaphysics derived from divine incorporeality, that the unification of "body," "soul," and "Spirit" is not only shown to be possible but actual in the Incarnation of the Word.

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argument for matter's eternality—that for God to be eternally "Creator," he must always have something upon which to work (*Princ* 2.1.4). Two Origenian doctrines surmount this "divine idleness" problem: [1] the Son is eternally generated from the Father (*Princ* 1.2.11); [2] in the Son exists prefigures and *logoi* of every created thing. These two eternal "creations," which are distinguished precisely in terms of their non-temporal character, imply that the Father was always "Creator," always "doing good" to his creation (*Princ* 1.4.4-5), and that everything outside of the Son (and Spirit?) was created (i.e. substantially and formally brought from potentiality to actuality) *ex nihilo*—even matter.

88 Annewies van den Hoek, "The Concept of σῶμα τῶν γραφῶν in Alexandrian Theology," *Studia Patristica* 19. Ed. E.A. Livingstone (Leuven, 1989) 251 notes that ancient Greek authors used σώμα to designate "body in a general sense: that is, any corporeal substance, element or even a mathematical figure," citing Plato, *Tim* 31b, 32c; Philo, *Migr* 12, *Conf* 190, *Dec* 82.

89 *Princ* 2.1.4, GK 290/GCS 109, 10-11: the "diversity of the world cannot exist apart from bodies." Origen is not claiming that determination itself, or diversity itself, must presuppose corporeal nature. This is obvious [1] because of his doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son, which means that at least two "different" persons existed for eternity without created corporeality; [2] *Princ* 2.1.3 says that the end of the present multifarious world will only result in the diversity of the "other world which will come after this," and so there is a diversity which exists even after this one has passed away.

90 *Princ* 3.5.1. God's act of creation, wherein he brought into actuality that which has always existed in Wisdom potentially (*Princ* 1.2.2, 1.4.4), grounds all progression and hence time. Thus both "body" and "soul" are "proved to be changeable and convertible by the very condition of [their] being created—for what was not and began to be is by this very fact shown to be of a changeable nature" (*Princ* 4.4.8, Butterworth 325, modified, GK 810/GCS 360, 12-15: *ut quoniam necesse erat uti corporibus intellectualem naturam, quae et commutabilis et convertibilis depraehenditur ea ipsa conditione, qua facta est—quod enim non fuit et esse coepit, ex hoc ipso naturae mutabilis designatur*).

91 *Princ* 1.1.3, 1.7.5, 2.1.4, 3.6.6, 4.4.6.

After describing the dramatic Fall of preexistent souls, Origen declares that there was in fact one soul that did not fall, but

> clinging to God from the beginning of the creation and ever after in a union inseparable and indissoluble . . . was made with him in a pre-eminent degree one spirit (*unus spiritus*). . . . The substance of this soul, then, mediating between God and the flesh (*Hac ergo substantia animae inter deum carnemque mediante*) (for it was not possible for the nature of God to mingle with a body apart from some medium), there is born, as we said, the God-man, the medium being that existence to whose nature it was not contrary to assume a body (*illa substantia media existente, cui utique contra naturam non erat corpus assumere*). Yet neither, on the other hand, was it contrary to nature for that soul, being as it was a rational existence (*substantia rationabilis*), to receive God . . .[92]

Here again Origen affirms that it is "contrary to nature" for the divine nature, also called "Spirit" throughout these sections,[93] to assume a body. Yet this unification occurs in the Incarnation in a unique way. It required a completely pure soul, the preexistent soul of Jesus, who did not fall with all the other souls and so was unencumbered by the impediments of a soul inclined toward the body.[94] The soul of Jesus, with ever-enduring zeal, participated in the Logos and "Spirit" until it completely unified with the divine nature, as iron over a fire becomes nearly indistinguishable from the fire itself.[95]

Thus the Word and the Spirit joined with the soul of Jesus, a union not contrary to nature since both metaphysical substances are incorporeal. But this soul still retained its metaphysical nature as well, and could therefore assume a body, a thing not contrary to its nature. Only in this manner, through the medium of the preexistent soul of Jesus, did the divine Word and Spirit "mingle with" and "assume" a body. Indeed the precise ordering—Spirit joins with soul, which joins with body—is the *sole* possibility for the three to be unified, a

92 *Princ* 2.6.3 (Butterworth 110, modified), GK 362/GCS 142, 4–143, 2.

93 In *Princ* 2.6.3, Origen describes the unification of Jesus' preexistent soul with the Logos as its becoming "one spirit" with the divine nature (cf. 1 Cor 6.17). *Princ* 2.6.4 states: "As a reward for its love, therefore, it is anointed with the 'oil of gladness', that is the soul with the Word of God is made Christ; for to be anointed with the oil of gladness means nothing else but to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And when he says, 'above his fellows', he indicates that the grace of the Spirit was not given to it as to the prophets, but that the essential 'fulness' of the Word of God himself was within it . . ." (Butterworth 112).

94 *Princ* 1.1.5.

95 *Princ* 2.6.6.

point the Marcionites failed to appreciate.[96] The only other instance of such a union in *Peri Archon* is the threefold distinction of Scripture in *Princ* 4.2.4.[97]

Inspired Scripture as Metaphysical Analogue of Incarnation

Origen was the first in the Alexandrian tradition, and perhaps ever, to describe Scripture having body, soul, *and* Spirit.[98] The crucial point, often overlooked,[99] is that Origen's innovation underscores the particular metaphysics of his doctrine of inspired Scripture. Origen thinks that Scripture's "spiritual" nature (*Princ* 1.pref.8, 4.2.4) means, quite straightforwardly, that the divine nature with all its inherent properties (i.e. incorporeality) is perceptible in the

96 They constantly reduce to one nature, be it in their doctrine of fixed human natures or their understanding of inspired Scripture. See n.37.

97 It is true that Origen speaks of the three substances as *potentially* joined in his moral discussions (*Princ* 2.8.4; 3.4.2; cf. n.37), which Dively Lauro, *The Soul and Spirit*, 87-93 notices and applies to the threefold distinction of Scripture in *Princ* 4.2.4. There is undoubtedly moral significance to Scripture's anthropological structure, but that structure is more directly analogous to the metaphysical unification found in the Incarnation, since, for example, Origen argues that Scripture's "body" is not always obviously "present" (i.e. "beneficial" or "hermeneutically valuable"), but its Spirit is never absent (*Princ* 4.2.5; 4.3.5). Unlike the potential unification in the *moral* life, wherein the Spirit's presence is contingent upon each soul's virtue, the *metaphysical* unification in the Incarnation and Scripture entails the Spirit's necessary and persistent presence. In other words, Origen urges that if Scripture is truly inspired by the Spirit, i.e. is "spiritual" (*Princ* 1.pref.8; 2.7; 4.2.2; 4.2.7), then the Spirit is *always* united with the body of Scripture through the soul of Scripture. Its ostensible absence attests only to our lack spiritual perception (*Princ* 4.1.7). Scripture's Spirit is complete and actual, not partial and potential.

98 Van den Hoek, "The Concept of σῶμα τῶν γραφῶν," 250-4. Van den Hoek overlooks this result of her study: "This interpretive structure [i.e. body and soul of Scripture correspond to literal and hidden meanings] is passed on by Origen to later periods and goes on to play an important role in hermeneutics" (254). Yet Origen does not simply pass it on, but *adds* the "Spirit."

99 Some regard Origen's description as a wholesale adoption of Greek tripartite anthropology. So R. Gögler, *Zur Theologie des Biblischen Wortes bei Origenes* (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1963) 304: "following contemporary trichtomous anthropology"; Charles J. Scalise, "Origen and the *Sensus Literalis*," in *Origen of Alexandria: His World and Legacy*. Eds. Charles Kannengiesser and William L. Petersen. Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity, vol. 1 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988) 123: "it is Greek anthropology which provides his primary ground for argument." The common view is that Origen follows scriptural passages (Wisd 15.11, 1 Thess 5.23) that describe "man" in such terms. So Crouzel, *Origen*, 87-92; Dively Lauro, *The Soul and Spirit*, 86-7.

corporeal text.[100] So there is "a superhuman element" in every scriptural passage,[101] and perceiving that element renders one a "partaker of all the doctrines of the Spirit's counsel (κοινωνὸς τῶν ὅλων τῆς βουλῆς αὐτοῦ γένηται δογμάτων)."[102] Scriptural understanding is a participation in the divine, for "divine doctrines" are themselves incorporeal (i.e. have a distinct metaphysical character).[103] Indeed, the concepts of "inspiration" (ἐνθουσιασμός) and "inspired" (θεοπνεύστος) themselves indicate "that God is there," that the Spirit is present in Scripture.[104] And if the divine Spirit resides truly and fully in Scripture's body—a thing seemingly impossible in the first cycle—then it could only be in the manner narrated in the second cycle, through Incarnation. The structure of inspired Scripture, then, is *the* unique metaphysical analogue of Christ's Incarnation in *Peri Archon*.[105]

Origen also alludes to the relationship between the Incarnate Word and Scripture in other places of Book 4, albeit indirectly. Twice Origen links Christ's Incarnation with the giving of "saving doctrines" (σωτηρίας δόγματα), as he does with Scripture.[106] He says that it was only

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100 Van den Hoek, "The Concept of σῶμα τῶν γραφῶν," 250-1 shows that in antiquity σώμα was an oft-employed designation for a written text.

101 *Princ* 4.1.7 (Butterworth 265), GK 690/GCS 303 1-2: τὸ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον τῶν νοημάτων.

102 *Princ* 4.2.7, GK 722/GCS 319, 1-3. That αὐτοῦ refers to the Spirit is clear from the beginning of the paragraph (GK 720/GCS 318, 9: πνεύματι).

103 *Princ* 1.1.7 (Butterworth 12), GK 114/GCS 23, 21: *divina dogmata, quae manifeste incorporea sunt*.

104 Crouzel, *Origen*, 74; e.g. *Princ* 4.1.6, GK 688/GCS 302, 5: ἐνθουσιασμου; *Princ* 4.2.1, GK 694/GCS 305, 10: θεοπνεύστους. Cf. also de Lubac, *History and Spirit*, 338 n.8 and 344. Origen is particularly lucid in *HomLev* 4.1: "What is 'the Lord'? Let the Apostle respond to you and learn from him that 'the Lord is Spirit.' If therefore both the Lord and God are 'Spirit,' we ought to hear spiritually those things which the Spirit says. Still further I say, we are to believe the things the Lord says, not only to be spiritual things, *but even the Spirit*. I will prove these things not with my own understanding but from the Gospels. Hear our Lord and Savior when he speaks to his disciples, 'the words which I spoke to you are spirit and life'" (Heine 70, my emphasis).

105 Dively Lauro, *The Spirit and Soul*, 86-93 rightly identifies the perfecting utility of Scripture's threefold structure, but this is just the second half of the miracle of Incarnation. The first half is God's condescension into body, which requires a specific metaphysical ordering (*Princ* 2.6.3-4//4.2.4: "consists of"); the second half is human ascension into God, which is now a possibility because of God's embodiment (*Princ* 2.6.7//4.2.4 "for man's salvation").

106 Incarnation: *Princ* 4.1.1 (GK 670/GCS 293, 8), 4.1.2 (GK 676/GCS 296, 4-5); Scripture: 4.2.7 (GK 722/GCS 319, 3: ὅλων τῆς βουλῆς αὐτοῦ . . . δογμάτων, referring to the Spirit through Scripture), 4.2.9 (GK 726/GCS 321, 10: δογμάτων, cf. Butterworth 285 "true doctrines" in Scripture).

> after the advent of Jesus that the inspiration (ἔνθεον) of the prophetic words and the spiritual nature of Moses' law (τὸ πνευματικὸν τοῦ Μωσέως) came to light. For before the advent of Christ it was not at all possible to bring forward clear proofs (παραδείγματα) of the divine inspiration (θεοπνεύστους) of the old scriptures.

Therefore the "veil" of which Paul speaks, which prevents the apprehension of the divine light in Scripture, was at the advent of Jesus "taken away and there came little by little[107] knowledge of those 'good things' of which the letter of the law held a 'shadow'."[108] Indeed, in the paragraph before *Princ* 4.2, Origen urges himself and his audience to excel beyond the "first principles" and press on "toward perfection" (Heb 6.1), toward divine wisdom (1 Cor 2.6). This Wisdom, avers Origen, once clandestine, "now is manifested both through the scriptures and through the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'."[109]

In fact, Origen already established the connection between the Incarnation and Scripture back in the first chapter of *Peri Archon*. Significantly, Origen there responds to those who use the passage in John's Gospel that says "God is Spirit" to support the notion that God is a body. He retorts that Scripture, "when it wishes to point to something of an opposite nature to this dense and solid body," frequently employs the word "spirit," as when Paul says "the letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (2 Cor 3.6). Origen explains this text by paralleling what is behind Scripture's "veil" to what is behind Christ's body: "if we turn to the Lord, where also the Word of God is, and where the Holy Spirit reveals spiritual knowledge (*scientiam spiritalem*), the veil will be taken away, and we shall then with unveiled face behold in the holy scriptures the glory of the Lord."[110] Only by beholding "the Lord," the Incarnate Word, through the knowledge revealed by the Spirit, can one truly apprehend the divine nature in Scripture. The implication is clear. Just as the Word is embodied in the Lord Jesus, and just as we can only perceive his divinity through the Spirit, so it is

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107 Butterworth 265 has "at once" for κατὰ βραχὺ, but this phrase clearly means "little by little" (LSJ, βραχύς, s.v.) Perhaps Butterworth is thinking of κατὰ ταχὺ, which is closer to the meaning of his translation.

108 *Princ* 4.1.6 (Butterworth 264-5, modified), GK 686/GCS 301, 13-302, 10, quoting 2 Cor 3.15-16, Heb. 10.1.

109 *Princ* 4.1.7, GK 694/GCS 305, 6-8: νῦν διά τε γραφῶν προφητικῶν καὶ τῆς ἐπιφανείας τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, quoting Rom 16.25-27; cf. 2 Tim 1.10, 6.14.

110 *Princ* 1.1.2 (Butterworth 8, emphasis mine), GK 104/GCS 18, 16-19: *Si autem 'convertamus nos ad dominum,' ubi est et verbum dei, et ubi spiritus sanctus revelat scientiam spiritalem, tunc 'auferetur velamen,' et tunc 'revelata facie' in scripturis sanctis 'gloriam domini speculamur'.*

with inspired Scripture. The nature and form[111] of both divine embodiments are the same, and so both must be approached in the same ὁδός.

Argument: Scriptural Literalism is a Christo-Metaphysical Error

Interpretation as Apprehension

But how, precisely, does the explication of Scripture's metaphysical structure address *the* fundamental error of both interlocutors—scriptural literalism? Origen has defined the object, inspired Scripture, but how does this govern the subjective act of interpretation?[112]

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111 One could say that the Incarnation and Scripture share identical material and formal causes. Indeed, it is interesting to note that the two passages where the inspiration of Scripture is linked with the Trinity, there is almost a regularity in the prepositions and cases employed to describe each Person's involvement: in *Princ* 4.2.2 (cited *supra*, 15; GK 700) the inspiration of Scripture is "*of* the Holy Spirit" (ἐξ ἐπιπνοίας τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος), "*by* the will of the Father" (βουλήματι τοῦ πατρὸς; dative case) and "*through* Jesus Christ" (διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). The prepositional association is similar in *Princ* 4.2.7 (GK 720/GCS 318, 9-10: προνοίᾳ θεοῦ διὰ τοῦ . . . λόγου, with the Spirit's intention, rather than role, defined—hence its dative case). The first ("of") could signify material causality (we have seen that the Spirit really is an underlying metaphysical element of Scripture), the second ("by") efficient causality, but the third ("through" rather than "according to," κατά) is admittedly less clear. However διά with the genitive case can mean "arising from, through, by means of" (LSJ, διά, s.v.; à la Latin *per*), and so the inspiration of Scripture could be said to happen only "by means of" Christ, i.e. in the manner of the Word's incarnate form. We must concede, though, that the prepositions are not always so fixed. In *Princ* 1.pref.8 inspiration is said to happen "*through* the Holy Spirit" (GK 94/GCS 14, 6: *per spiritum dei*) and in *Princ* 1.3.1 "*by* the Holy Spirit" (GK 158/GCS 49, 6: *a sacto spiritu*). In strictly linguistic terms, then, the best one can say is that while Origen is more consistent and precise with the metaphysical nature and form of inspired Scripture when the whole Trinity is in view, he is more fluid when linking its inspiration to one member of the godhead (on Origen's familiarity with prepositional precision, cf. *De orat* 6.1). Yet the case made here for the analogy between Incarnation and Scripture depends less on linguistic precision and more on conceptual patterns throughout *Peri Archon*.

112 Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, details the "contours" and context of Origen's ideal hermeneutical subject, i.e. the interpreter. In Origen's view, a whole way of life is necessary for right exegesis. The brief remarks here only supplement Martens's work with some basic metaphysical assumptions that animate that exegetical life. Asceticism (ch.8), for example, is what for Origen allows one to participate in the Spirit (rather than the flesh) so that one actually *becomes* "spiritual," having the Spirit through which "spiritual things," including scriptural teachings, are divined (*Princ* 4.4.4-5).

Origen followed the ancient commonality that a thing is intuited by something of the same metaphysical nature.[113] It is only through bodily eyes that bodily things, "visible things," are perceived. Likewise only soul or mind, which is incorporeal and "invisible," apprehends intellectual objects (*intellectualia*, also *incorporea*) like reasons, causes, principles or ideas. Lastly and most importantly, it is only through the Spirit that one can hope to perceive "spiritual things" (τὰ πνευματικά).[114]

That the divine Spirit is necessary in the apprehension of spiritual things is most apparent when Origen discusses the Spirit's role in exegesis. In *Princ* 2.7, Origen's second major discussion of the Holy Spirit, he observes that after the "coming of the Savior" the Spirit was given in abundance to all believers in accordance with the prophecy in Joel (2.28; Acts 2.16-17). With this newly acquired presence of the Spirit, a "most splendid fact is revealed":

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113 *Princ* 1.1.7. Crouzel, *Origen*, 74: "an old Platonist adage, which is simply a matter of common sense: only like can know like." Marguerite Harl, *Origène et la fonction révélatrice du Verbe incarné* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1958) 92 n.90 cites Aristotle, *Met.* 3, 1000b: ἡ δὲ γνῶσις τοῦ ὁμοίου τῷ ὁμοίῳ (who cites Empedocles, *Fr.* 109), among others. She also observes that although Origen only once explicitly formulates such a principle (*Sel. in Ps.* 17, 2), it is "without any doubt" the "principle of knowledge in Origen as in Clement" (224). This notion emerges, for instance, when he discusses six possible meanings for ἀρχή in a key passage of the *Commentary on John* (*Jo* 1.90-108). The fifth meaning, the "beginning" or "principle" according to learning, he divides into two aspects: "One involves its nature and the other its relation to us. It is as if we should say in the case of Christ that, on the one hand, in his nature, divinity is the beginning. But, on the other hand, his relation to us who are not able to begin from the greatness of the truth about him, it [i.e. the beginning] is his humanity" (*Jo* 1.107; Heine, FotC 80, 55-6; Blanc, SC 120, 116). Humans must "begin" with perception of the "humanity" of Jesus.

114 *Princ* 1.pref.8 and 4.2.4, *et al.* Origen frequently cites Pauline statements to support the idea of spiritual apprehension explicated here; e.g. *Princ* 2.8.2 (1 Cor 2.14), 4.2.3 (1 Cor 2.16). Harl, *Origène et la fonction révélatrice du Verbe incarné*, 92 and 224 identifies 1 Cor 2.11 as an important epistemological verse in Origen, which runs: τίς γὰρ οἶδεν ἀνθρώπων τὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἰ μὴ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ; οὕτως καὶ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐδεὶς ἔγνωσεν εἰ μὴ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ (NA 28; cf. *De orat.* 1.1). While this text is never directly cited in *Peri Archon*, Origen often references 1 Cor 2.10 (ἡμῖν δὲ ἀπεκάλυψεν ὁ θεὸς διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος· τὸ γὰρ πνεῦμα πάντα ἐραυνᾷ, καὶ τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ) in connection with both the objective "spiritual meaning" of Scripture (*Princ* 4.2.7, GK 722/GCS 319, 2: 'τοῖς βάθεσι' τοῦ νοῦ τῶν λέξεων; *Princ* 4.3.4, GK 744/GCS 330, 1 and 14: χωρὶς πάσης ἀναγωγῆς . . . σώζειν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν [of the three senses], μετὰ τοῦ μὴ ἀθετεῖσθαι τὴν κατὰ τὸ ῥητὸν ἐντολήν, 'βάθη σοφίας θεοῦ') and the subjective necessity of the Holy Spirit for apprehending the spiritual meaning of Scripture, which is endless in its depths (*Princ* 4.3.14, GK 774/GCS 345, 11-12: *audiat quomodo Paulus apostolus 'per spiritum sanctum, qui perscrutatur etiam profunda dei'*).

> that whereas the truths written in the prophets and the law of Moses were formerly understood by very few, namely by the prophets alone, and scarcely anywhere was there one out of the whole people who could get beyond the literal meaning (*intellectum corporeum*) and perceive (*sentire*) something greater, that is, could detect a spiritual sense (*spiritale quid poterat intellegere*) in the law and prophets, now there are innumerable multitudes who, although unable to explain logically and clearly the process of their spiritual perception (*spiritalis intellegentiae*), have yet almost to a man the firm conviction that circumcision ought not to be understood literally, nor the Sabbath rest . . .[115]

It is only through the Spirit, through "spiritual perception," that one can apprehend the "spiritual" in Scripture. The divine Spirit is called "comforter," says Origen, "because he provides comfort for souls to whom he opens and reveals the apprehension of spiritual knowledge."[116] The soul itself cannot attain such apprehension, but must receive it from the Spirit by participating in the divine nature and therefore utilizing it as a conduit to perceive things of like nature. As Rahner has it, "The 'spirit' alone grasps the invisible and spiritual blessings."[117]

Therefore, when Origen describes the metaphysical makeup of inspired Scripture—that it is "body," "soul," and "Spirit" unified in an incarnational manner—he does not merely assert the vacuity of literal interpretation for spiritual instruction. He establishes Scripture's nature so as to determine Scripture's apprehension, its interpretation. Scripture's nature as "spiritual" (*Princ* 1.pref.8), as the divine Spirit joined with the body of visible Scripture (*Princ* 4.2.4), means that it must ultimately be perceived like all divine things, in a more-than-bodily manner, with a "divine sense" (αἴσθησις θεία/*sensus divinus*).[118] For Origen, then, literalism is not just a hermeneutical error; it is also a Christo-metaphysical one.

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115 *Princ* 2.7.2, GK 374-6/GCS 149, 10-22; cf. also *Princ* 1.pref.8.

116 *Princ* 2.7.4 (Butterworth 119, modified), GK 380/GCS 152, 5-7: *De spiritu vero sancto 'paracletus' 'consolator' debet intellegi, pro eo quod consolationem praestat animabus, quibus aperit et revelat sensum scientiae spiritalis.* cf. Princ 1.1.2 where the Spirit is said to reveal the divine Word in both Christ and Scripture.

117 Karl Rahner "The 'Spiritual Senses' According to Origen," in *Theological Investigations* 16. Translated by David Morland, O.S.B (New York: Seabury, 1979) 89. Cf. *Cant.* 3.12, and Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Pan Or* 15, who ascribes precisely this gift to Origen himself.

118 *Princ* 1.1.9, GK 120/GCS 27, 8 and 4.4.10, GK 820/GCS 364, 8; cf. GK 121 n. 26. Marguerite Harl, "La 'bouche' et le 'coeur' de l'apôtre: deux images bibliques du 'sens divin' de l'homme ('Proverbes' 2,5) chez Origène," in *Le Déchiffrement du sens: Etudes sur l'herméneutique chrétienne d'Origène à Grégoire de Nysse* (Institut d'Etudes Augustiniennes: Paris, 1993)

Literalism as a Christo-Metaphysical Error

The existence and necessity of a unique mode of apprehension in exegesis is raised by Origen as a direct corollary of Scripture's threefold nature in *Princ* 4.2.4. There he cites *Shepherd of Hermas* 4.2.3, where Hermas is told to write two books and send one with Grapte, who will expound the contents to the "widows and orphans," and the other with Clement, who will go to "the cities without." Hermas himself is to proclaim the message to the Church's "presbyters."[119] Origen equates Grapte to Scripture's "body," Clement to its "soul," and Hermas is "the disciple of the Spirit." What distinguishes Hermas, other than his audience, is his mode of communication, for he "is bidden to announce the message in person, no longer through letters but through living words".[120] The "Spirit" of Scripture, being of a different communicative order, must be perceived in a different way—"in person."

As Origen signals in the last paragraph of the hermeneutical discourse, this realization constitutes a polemic against scriptural literalism. "Our aim has been," concludes Origen, "to show that there are certain things, the meaning of which it is impossible adequately to explain by any human language, but which are made clear rather through simple apprehension (*simpliciore . . . intellectu*) than through any power of words." This point, derived from God's incorporeality, is of utmost polemical significance:

159-69 shows how the "divine sense" (θεία αἴσθησις/*sensus divinus*) is for Clement and Origen, especially in its singular form (e.g. *Princ* 1.1.9 and 4.4.10), "the name of the global faculty of the *perception* of the divine" (159) which is itself only activated through divine illumination. The givenness of this divine faculty in humans is powerfully captured in Origen's frequent use of two key biblical images—the expanding heart (cf. 2 Cor 6.11) and the opening mouth (cf. Ps 118. 31; LXX)—both of which depict the necessity of *receiving* the "presence of the Word . . . [the mouth] is above all, like the *heart* of man, the faculty that can open and enlarge itself to receive this presence of the Word, the words of God, God himself" (174). See also de Lubac, *History and Spirit*, 339. Berchman, *From Origen to Philo*, 191-200 identifies this as Origen's adaptation of the Peripatetic notion of "the Agent Intellect," which, like the light of the sun, intellectually illumines both the subject and object of knowledge. For Origen this Agent Intellect is the Logos who ceaselessly energizes the human intellect in the process of cognition, and is thus indispensible for the union of the human and divine intellects (196-7). Though I follow Origen's language in *Peri Archon* by emphasizing the role of the "Spirit" in this process, Berchman's observations only reinforce the notion of "apprehension" traced here.

119 This is Origen's summary of the text, not the exact order of it.

120 *Princ* 4.2.4, GK 712/GCS 314 3-5.

> This rule [i.e. simple apprehension in accordance with divine nature] must control our interpretation even of the divine writings, in order that what is said therein may be estimated in accordance not with the meanness of the language but with the divine power of the Holy Spirit who inspired their composition.[121]

In other words, one must know the nature of divinity in order to properly exegete divinely inspired Scripture, for interpretation is fundamentally an act of apprehending the divinely embodied.

Origen would maintain this polemic throughout his life, as one well-known passage containing the Christ/Scripture parallel illustrates.[122] His first homily on Leviticus begins:

> As 'in the Last Days,' the Word of God, which was clothed with the flesh of Mary, proceeded into this world. What was seen in him was one thing; what was understood was something else. For the sight of his flesh was open for all to see, but the knowledge of his divinity was given to the few, even the elect. So also when the Word of God was brought to humans through the Prophets and the Lawgiver, it was not brought without proper clothing. For just as there it was covered with the veil of flesh, so here with the veil of the letter, so that indeed the letter is seen as flesh but the spiritual sense hiding within is perceived as divinity. . . . But perchance the worthy and the unworthy see and hear these things according

121 *Princ* 4.3.15, GK 780/GCS 347, 27-30: *Ad quam regulam etiam divinarum litterarum intellegentia retinenda est, quo scilicet ea, quae dicuntur, non pro vilitate sermonis, sed pro divinitate sancti spiritus, qui eas conscribi inspiraverit, censeantur.*

122 On this parallel, cf. de Lubac, *History and Spirit*, 385-405; Gögler, *Zur Theologie*, 299-307, esp. 301: "The character of the biblical Word and the flesh of Christ are parallels in the one great incarnational economy of revelation"; Michael W. Holmes, "Origen and the Inerrancy of Scripture," *JETS* 24.3 (1981): 224. Typical texts include: *Fr in Mt* Fr 11; *Comm ser 1-145 in Mt* 27; *Comm in Mt 10-17* 10.6; *Phil* 15, 16. De Lubac (*History and Spirit* 389 [340 in original]) seems to conceive of this parallel in terms of a mere comparison: "In the letter of Scripture, the *logos* is not at all incarnated in the fashion, properly speaking, as it is in the humanity of Jesus" (my translation) and indeed notes (389 n.18) other Origenian comparisons, e.g. the letter as "milk" and the spirit as "solid food" (cf. *Hom 1-16 in Lev* 4.8). Harl, *Origène et la fonction révélatrice du Verbe incarné*, 142 n.13 appears to accept this view. Though de Lubac still speaks of Scripture as a kind of "incorporation of the Logos" (386), the thesis proposed in this essay goes beyond such a conception by suggesting an essential metaphysical relation (rather than a primarily metaphorical one) between the Incarnation and Scripture in Origen's thought.

> to the letter, which is, as it were, the flesh of the Word of God and the clothing of its divinity. But 'blessed are those eyes' which inwardly see the divine spirit that is concealed in the veil of the letter. . . .[123]

Immediately following, Origen turns toward a defense of allegory, directing his words at those "among us" who "ridicule" such interpretation and castigate it as "stratagems of language or the cloud of allegory."[124] After bemoaning the sinful consequences of following the letter that kills, Origen addresses his antagonistic hearers in a way reminiscent of *Peri Archon*: "Therefore," he proclaims, "let us fall to your detractions so long as the Church, which has already turned toward the Lord, may know the truth of the Word which is completely covered under the veil of the letter." For "the Holy Spirit himself must be entreated by us to remove every cloud and all darkness which obscures the vision of our hearts hardened with the stains of sins in order that we may be able to behold the spiritual and wonderful knowledge of this Law."[125]

All the polemical elements are present: the affirmation that Scripture's structure is analogous to Christ's Incarnation, the necessity of perceiving, therefore, that which lies beyond the "veil of flesh," and the subjective requisite for such apprehension identified as participation in and empowerment by the Holy Spirit. This confirms that, for Origen, perceiving the metaphysics of scriptural inspiration (*Princ* 4.2.4)—which requires a prior understanding of a threefold metaphysics resulting from divine incorporeality (*Princ* 1-2.3) and the possibility of their incarnational union (*Princ* 2.4-3.6)—is a superlative hermeneutical point. This not only renders literalism absurd, but makes spiritual interpretation the only proper way to read Scripture "as divine writings."[126]

Conclusion

Origen's threefold distinction of Scripture in *Princ* 4.2.4, when one appreciates its polemical context and metaphysical character, unifies the argument of *Peri Archon* under the purpose of refuting scriptural literalism. Origen discloses that the metaphysical structure of inspired Scripture is analogous to the Incarnation of the divine Word. The divine (incorporeal) nature of Scripture

123 *Hom 1-16 in Lev* 1.1 (Heine, FOTC, 29), Borret (SC) 66.

124 *Hom 1-16 in Lev* 1.2 (Heine, 30), Borret 68, 23: *stropha verbi et allegoriae nubilo.*

125 *Hom 1-16 in Lev* 1.4 (Heine 30), Borret 68-70.

126 *Princ* 4.3.5, my translation, GK 746/GCS 331, 17: ὡς θείοις γράμμασι, with *Princ* 4.3.6-13 being a sketch of how to read the OT allegorically.

itself, therefore, necessitates a hermeneutical approach that moves beyond the "bodily."

This polemic, intended for the simple and the Marcionites, draws upon two crucial metaphysical points established in the two cycles (Books 1-3). The first, which the simple had failed to grasp, is that God is eminently incorporeal and that he created incorporeal and corporeal things, which results in the threefold metaphysics of "body" (corporeality), "soul" (created incorporeality), and "Spirit" (divine incorporeality). The peculiar metaphysics of each raise the problem of their unification, for "body," being temporal and corporeal, is the inverse of "Spirit," which is non-temporal and incorporeal. In the second cycle Origen discloses the sole possibility of their complete union, which the Marcionites (and the simple) had failed to grasp—the Incarnation of the Word through the perfect soul of Jesus. These two premises constitute the metaphysical backdrop of Origen's claim that inspired Scripture is made up of "body," "soul," and "Spirit." This point reveals the scriptural literalism of his interlocutors to be a profound Christo-metaphysical error about the object they claim to interpret.

Thus the conclusions of Books 1-3 play an integral role in *Princ* 4.2.4. Book 4 is not, as some think, an expedient addition unrelated to the earlier cycles. Rather, the metaphysical observations of the first two cycles climax in their application to the nature of inspired Scripture and the subsequent exegetical demands. This, then, suggests that *Peri Archon* is polemically unified around the inseparability of Origen's incarnational metaphysics from his allegorical hermeneutics.